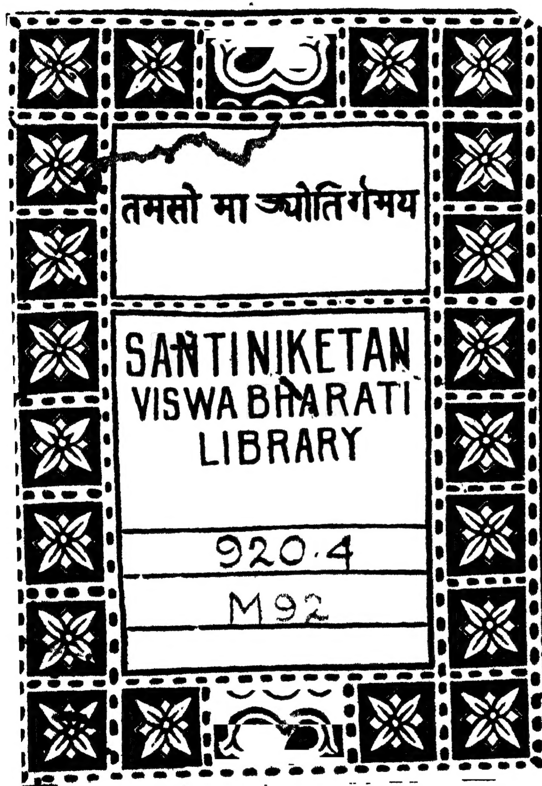
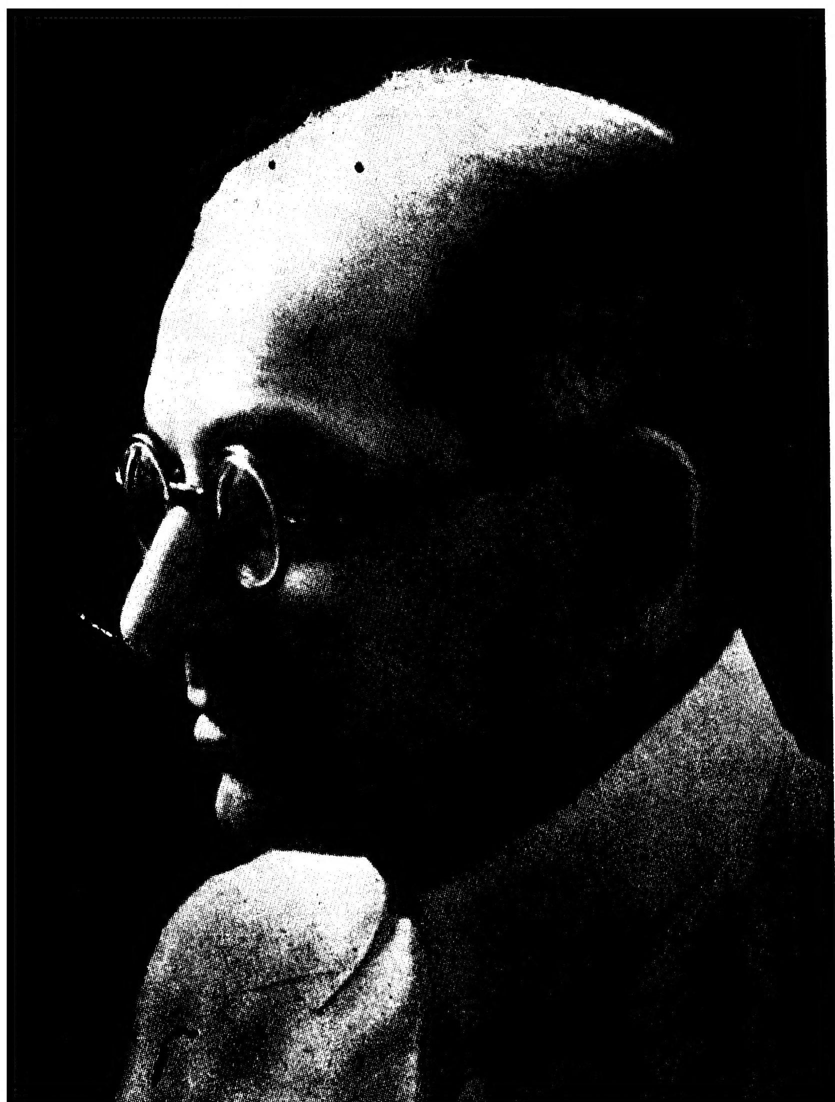


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MUNSHIJI

To

SHRI K. M. MUNSHI

(On His Sixtieth birthday)

Our deepest aspirations lie unseen
Like parent roots the visible earth entombs:
Idolators of the world of senses—keen
On ponderables—will only swear by blooms.

But weaned from what our senses will ignore,
Shall not all things of beauty swiftly cease
To be nourished by life's sap? The mystic core
Who can disown and yet hope to increase.

In Wisdom?—Through more vigilance one must find
Mind's little rushlights flicker out in the end
(As the dim eye through straining must grow blind)
And joy's sun-flowers wilt and glooms descend.

Born to this age of Godless science, my friend,
You had the courage to call fantasy
Our pitiful heritage of gleams that waned
Thanks to our dark-intoxicate revelry!

Dowered with an insight rare and true and bold,
You saw into the heart of the undelight
Of life's false play where the players named sun's own gold
The fire-fly dots that stipple plumbless Night.

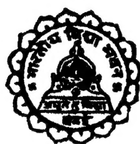
Who appraised you only as an able son
Of intellect but saw what met the eye:
Yours was the vision at dusk of the coming Dawn:
The soul's lost vista—the Spirit's epiphany.

With love and good wishes
from
DILIP KUMAR ROY
Bombay

[30th December, 1946]

MUNSHI

HIS ART AND WORK



: PUBLISHERS :

Shri Kanaialal Munshi
Diamond Jubilee Committee



MUNSHI : HIS ART AND WORK

First Published 30th December, 1946

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FOREWORD.

It is with feelings of genuine pleasure that the Editors present this volume to the public on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Shri K. M. Munshi.

The Office-bearers of Shri Munshi Heerak Mahotsava Samiti planned, among other things, to produce a volume in English commemorating Munshiji's sixtieth birthday. The Editors, to whom this responsible task was entrusted, felt that this volume should be something different from the usual ones published on such occasions. It is with this idea that we decided that the volume should be a real mirror of Munshiji's art and work—wherever possible in his own words—and not a pre-arranged pyramid of general appreciation.

The contributors have known Munshiji intimately and come into very close contact with his art and work. They have tried to be as objective as possible. But, by the very nature of their personal relations, their assessment, we confess, is bound to be coloured by their admiration for him and the inspiration which many of them have received from him. At the same time, for the very reason the assessment by such persons has an illuminating value so far as the different facets of Munshiji's personality and achievements are considered.

That Munshiji has come to occupy a prominent place in the shining galaxy of modern Indian literary and public men is a fact which none can deny or dispute. The unremitting toil of such a dynamic Renaissance-man in different walks of life and in different spheres of literary art during the last thirty-five years and more, and his consequent contribution to the general heritage of our country, is something which challenges attention and deserves a fuller study. And the more his art and work are known and understood, the greater will be the advantage to the country. The Editors fervently hope that this volume will serve this purpose and offer all those that come into contact with it refreshing light and rich experience.

THE EDITORS.

INTRODUCTION

[The Welcome Address delivered by Shri Pranlal Devkaran Nanjee on the occasion of the Sixtieth Birthday Celebration of Munshiji]

I have very great pleasure in welcoming you here this evening. I am grateful to you for responding to my invitation. Munshiji has just celebrated his 60th birthday and on this aupsicious occasion we have met today to felicitate him and offer him the best of good wishes for a long life of health and happiness.

Munshiji is so well known that it would be presumptuous on my part to introduce him to you.

Munshiji's brilliant career, his versatile talents, his activities and achievements in the fields of politics, legal profession, literature, education and social service, and his contribution to the advancement of Indian culture, Bharatiya Sanskriti, are too well known to need mention here. Munshiji is a scholar, man of letters, novelist and dramatist of great distinction.

Munshiji has, in an extremely busy life, laboured in diverse spheres—forensic, literary, social, educational, political and cultural.

As an emnient lawyer he has come to be acknowledged as one of the foremost in the country. His conduct of political cases arising form the 'Quit India' movement has evoked admiration all over the country. As a politician his services have been outstanding. The reputation which he gained as an administrator during the days of the Congress Ministry in 1937-39 are still fresh in the public mind. It is common knowledge that during the Congress Ministry the Greater Bombay scheme was planned and prepared by him, and had the Congress Ministry been in power the scheme would have come into existence in 1939. He has been a leading Congressman in

the country since 1930. Since 1941 he has been the most uncompromising exponent of the integrity of India, for which the National movement has laboured for the last sixty years.

Munshiji has fought for the reorganisation of our social and educational life from his young days. Bombay owes its Temple Entry Act to him. As an ardent champion of Prohibition he worked ceaselessly for its introduction in 1939. He had been connected with the University for Bombay 20 years. He has been mainly resonsible for the present Bombay University Act and had been the University's representative in the Bombay Legislature for 20 years. He has been a trustee of several educational trusts. He has helped in organising and conducting several educational institutions like the Children's Aid Society, the largest of its kind in India; the Hansraj Morarji Public School; the Kabibai High School; the Fellowship School; the Panchagani Hindu High School; the Birla Public School; the Liberty High School; the Institute of Agriculture, Anand; the Mungalal Goenka Department of Post-graduate Studies; and above all, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, which includes the Megji Mathradas College of Arts and the Narondas Manordas Institute of Science, Sanskrit Pathashalas, Gita Vidyalaya, and publishes the well-known series like the Singhi Series, the Munshi Literature Series and the Bharatiya Vidya Memoirs and Studies. As a result of his energetic drive the Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti has organised the preparation of a History of India in ten volumes, four of which are almost ready for the press.

His literary work has been great. His 50 odd works consist of novels, dramas, biographies, autobiographies, history, criticism, research, political and religious works. He is accepted as the greatest living master of historical romance in the country. As a literary artist he is among the foremost. Many of his novels have been translated into several Indian languages and some of his novels and plays have been staged and put on the cinema screen. But more than all these, by his creative vision he has given us a picture of India through most of its ages. He has not been content with writing history, but has sought to revivify our past through centuries by his creative

art. He has given us the vision of Shukra's battle against the gods; of Devayani's devotion to her father; of Sukanya and Chyavana; of the sublime unity between Vasishtha and Arundhati; of the war between Divodas and Shambar, the first historical event found in the *Vedas;* of the immortal lovers, Agastya and Lopamudra; of Vishvamitra, one of the greatest of Vedic Rishis, and founders of the expansive Aryan Culture. He has also given us the full length portrait of Vasishtha, the greatest apostle of Aryan Culture, and of his grandson Parashara, the first seer of non-violence; of Parashuram, the mighty *avatar* of the Deity in the splendour of his strength and power; of Arjun Kartavirya, the thousand-armed ambitious emperor whose pride touched the sky; and of Aurva and Sagara who saved Aryavarta and its culture from its enemies. In his novel on Kautilya, he has given us the full length portrait of the greatest political thinker of any age and the first architect of Indian political unity, and his disciple Chandragupta, who drove out Alexander's armies from India. He has given us the picture of the Ashrams of Agastya, Vasishtha, Vishvamitra, and of Naimisharanya, the sacred forest, where sprung the dynamics of Indian thought. He has recreated the lost play of the Sanskrit poet Vishakhadatta in his *Dhruvaswaminidevi* which gives us the picture of classical India of the Gupta period when Chandragupta, whom Vincent Smith considers the greatest emperor of India, and his imperial spouse *Dhruvaswaminidevi,* ruled the country. His historical work *Imperial Gurjaras* deals with the period from 550 to 1300 A.D. and the three empires of Gurjaradesha, of the Pratiharas of Kanauj, the Paramars of Malwa and the Chalukyas of Gujarat, till the fall of Gujarat in 1300 A.D. In this work, for the first time, we have a connected story of that neglected period of India's history, when the Pratihara emperors of Northern India ruled from Kanauj, and resisted the Arabs and the Turks.

In his novels relating to Gujarat, Munshiji has dealt with a part of the same period and has given us the picture of the heroism of Gujarat, when Mahmud of Gazni invaded it: of the building up of greater Gujarat in the days of Jayasimha Siddharaja. He has created for us historical personalities like

Prithvi Vallabh and Mrinalavati; Bhima, his queen Chauladevi and Mahmud Ghazni, one of the world's greatest soldiers, Munjala and Minaladevi, Siddharaj and Kak, Udayana and Hemchandra, giving us a romantic vision of Gujarat's glory. In his *Svapnadrishta* he has, through creative art, dealt with the birth of our Nationalism during the days of the Partition of Bengal. His great effort to delineate the spirit of India through his creative as well as literary and political works is inspired by a faith in Indian Nationalism, in the worship of Mother India and in Indian Culture as the instrument of human redemption.

He has preached the essentials of Indian Culture in many other ways by building up institutions, by an emphasis on Sanskritic cutlure, by his passionate advocacy of Akhand Hindustan, by his advocacy of Hindi as the national language of India, by his insistence on the reintegration of social life in the light of the essentials of our culture and his interpretation of *Gita* as the gospel leading man towards Divinity, and teaching him how to acquire the dynamic unity of his powers.

Munshiji has given to Gujarat novels, dramas, biographies, a history of its literature, and the political history of its most glorious epoch. He is the first among the moderns to preach the love of Gujarat as a decisive group sentiment (*Gujaratani asmita*), the first element of which, according to him, is the love of Motherland and the Aryan Culture.

In addition to his literary activities, Munshiji has helped in the cultural development of Gujarati life. He was the first in Gujarat, 23 years ago, who shook the people out of their other-worldly attitude and taught them to appreciate joy of life as expressed through the fullest developments of man's faculties. He brought romance in our attitude on marriage and domestic life. More than any single author, his plays have been staged by amateurs all over Gujarat. He was a pioneer in bringing music, amateur theotricals and the modern dance-dramas in the family life of Gujaratis. By various amateur theotricals and dance-dramas, most of which he directed himself, he has given to the life of Bombay a new artistic fullness.

It was mainly due to his influence that men and women of position first appeared on the amateur stage.

At the present time he is doing very useful work as a Member of the Constituent Assembly and some of its Committees.

Munshiji has come from poor but respectable parents. He has achieved his present position by his own ability. He is a self-made man shining by his own lustre. He is an outstanding personality and his spheres have been many and varied. His work has the stamp of creative ability. He has courage of a rare order and, when needs be, is a bold fighter. When on several occasions I had been wondering how one man can do so many things at the same time and with such ability, a very close friend of mine, who is also very intimate with Munshiji, remarked "Because Munshi is a genius".

In spite of all his high qualities and distinctive achievements, Munshiji is still very human. He is a good man, a devoted husband, a kind father, a staunch friend and a fine gentleman. Above all, his life has been one of service.

Dates and Events

On 30th December, 1887 Munshiji was born at Broach. His father Maneklal Narbheram Munshi was then a Mamlatdar at Mandvi in the Surat District. His mother's name was Smt. Tapiben Munshi. He was the only son of his parents who belonged to the Bhargava Brahmin community.

In 1897, like a true Brahmin, he was invested with the sacred thread, an event which he has described in two of his works.

In 1900 he was married to Atilakshmi Pathak, then seven years old.

In December 1901 he passed his matriculation examination from Khan Bahadur Dalal High School, Broach.

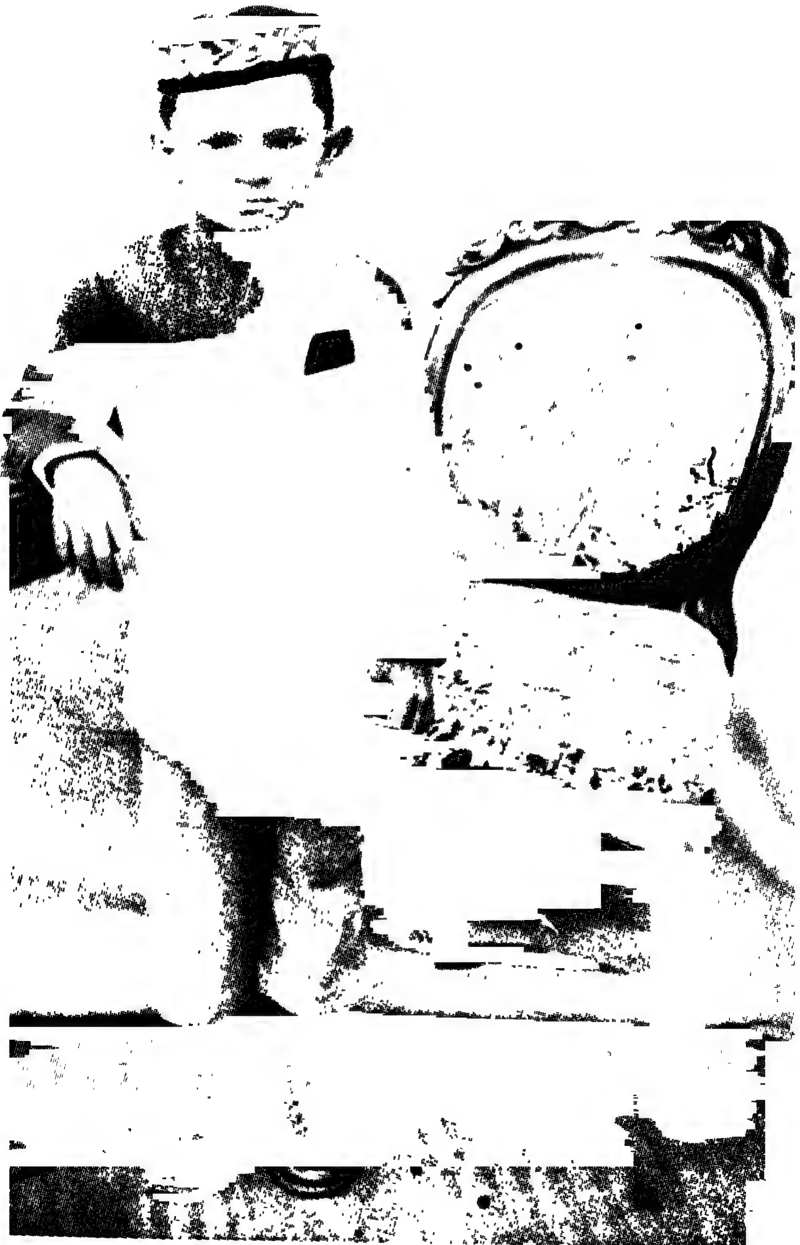
In January 1902 Munshiji joined the Baroda College. Mathematics was his Achilles' heel and he failed in Algebra by a few marks. In 1903, he passed the Previous Examination of the Bombay University.

In 1904, he came under the influence of Shri Aravinda Ghosh, then professor at Baroda College, took a keen interest in the new nationalism which Shri Aravinda represented and, as his autobiography describes, tried to associate himself with some terrorist activity, but did not join it. He founded a free Library, as a centre of the new national movement in Broach, his native city.

In 1905, Munshiji passed First LL.B. Examination in the First Class winning Dewan Bahadur Ambalal Sakarlal Prize given by the Baroda College.

In 1906, he passed his B. A. Examination, in Second Class, winning the Elliot Memorial Prize of the Baroda College.

In 1907, he, with some friends, attended the Surat Congress where the Moderates broke away from the Extremists headed by Lala Lajpat Rai, Lokamanya Tilak, Bepin Pal and



Munshiji at six (1894)

Shri Aravinda. This is described in his novel *Svapnadrashta.*

During these years his articles in English were accepted for publication by *East & West* and *The Hindustan Review*—then magazines of all-India reputation.

In 1910, Munshiji passed the LL.B. Examination and in October of the year settled in Bombay to keep terms for the Advocate (O.S.) examination. He then joined Gurjar Sabha, a society of young Gujaratis, and in 1911 became its secretary. He also won the Students Brotherhood Motiwala Prize for *Theory and Practice of Social Service.*

In 1912, Munshiji promoted the monthly *Bhargava,* a caste magazine, and became its editor. In the same year *Mari Kamla,* his first short story in Gujarati was published under the pen-name of Ghanshyam Vyas.

On March 15, 1913, he was enrolled as an Advocate on the Original Side of the Bombay High Court and in June joined the chamber of Mr. B. J. Desai as a "devil".

In the same year *Verni Vasulat,* Munshiji's first social novel, published anonymously as a serial in the weekly *Gujarati,* took the literary world of Gujarat by storm.

In 1915, he started *Young India* jointly with Shri Jamnadas Dwarkadas, both being its first editors, but he resigned shortly afterwards. He also joined the Home Rule League, then started by Mrs. Besant, and was one of the active members.

Kono Vank, another social novel, was in this year published serially in *Hindustan.*

In 1916, came his first historical novel, *Patanni Prabhuta.*

In 1917, *Mari Kamala Ane Bijo Vato* was published being a collection of short stories written in the interval.

Gujaratno Nath, a sequel to *Patanni Prabhuta,* a historical novel, was published serially in *Vismi Sadi,* the first illus-

trated monthly in Gujarati, edited by Haji Mahomed Allarakhia.

He was also a member of the Subjects Committee of the Indian National Congress and was also elected a Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Association, then the premier political association in Western India.

In 1919, he was elected a Secretary of the Bombay Home Rule League of which Shri M. A. Jinnah was the President, and his autobiography describes the very friendly relations which subsisted between the two—one of which now is an uncompromising champion of Akhand Hindustan as the other is of Pakistan.

In 1920, following Shri Jinnah, Munshiji resigned from the Home Rule League on account of Gandhiji, as President of the All-India Home Rule League, permitting an alteration of its constitution. He also, soon thereafter, resigned from the Indian National Congress which had come to be dominated by Gandhiji.

In this year *Prithvi Vallabha,* Munshiji's best known historical novel, was being published serially in *Vismi Sadi.* Several of his short stories published between 1915-1919, were also published in a collected form by the Sahitya Parishad.

In 1921, *Vava Shethnun Swatantrya,* a social play, was published. It was Munshiji's first attempt at play-writing.

In 1922, he founded the Sahitya Sansad, a literary society, in Bombay and was elected its President; he continues to be its President ever since. He also started *Gujarat,* an illustrated Gujarati monthly, and was its editor. *Rajadhiraj,* a historical novel, and a sequel to *Gujaratno Nath,* was published serially in this magazine. *Purandar Parajaya,* the first pauranic play, was also published.

In October 1922, as Munshiji states in his autobiography, he came to be recognised as a leading junior counsel at the

Bombay Bar and as a leading Gujarati author. It was at this time that literary collaboration between him and Lilavati Sheth, now Mrs. Munshi, began.

In 1923 Munshiji went to Europe.

In the same year *Bhagwan Kautilya,* a novel dealing with the times of the pre-Mauryan Nandas, was published serially in *Gujarat.* *Avibhakta Atma* (Undivided Soul), a pauranic play dealing with Munshiji's theory of the Undivided Soul, was also published.

In 1924, Munshiji's wife Smt. Atilakshmi died. In the same year *Svapnadrashta,* a social novel, dealing with the days of the Partition of Bengal and the break of the Congress at Surat was published.

He also undertook the work of framing the constitution of the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad. He was elected President of the Panchgani Hindu Education Society which he, in association with Pandit Brothers, founded. He was also elected Chairman of the Sir Harkisondas Narottamdas Hospital, and continues to be its Chairman since.

Be *Kharab Jan,* a social comedy, was published and so also *Tarpan,* a pauranic play.

In 1926, Munshiji was elected a fellow of the Bombay University from the Registered Graduates' Constituency and continues to be a Fellow ever since. He was also elected to the Syndicate of the University and except for some breaks has been a member of the Syndicate since.

On February 15, he married Lilavati Sheth, then an author of recognised repute, who was associated with him in editing *Gujarat,* for some time.

He was elected Vice-President of the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad and continued to be so till 1937, when he became its President.

Ketlak Lekho, Parts I and II, a collection of his miscellaneous works, were published.

He also, under Sir Chimanlal Setalvad's presidentship, started the Gujarat University Society in association with Dr. K. G. Naik and Prof. K. T. Shah. He was also nominated a member of the Baroda University Commission appointed by H. H. Sir Sayajirao Gaekwar for devising a scheme for the University of Baroda.

In 1927, he was elected Chairman of the Gujarati Board of Studies of the Bombay University. He was also elected to the Bombay Legislative Council from the University Constituency and continued to represent the University in the Bombay Legislature till 1945, when he did not stand.

Agnankit, a social play, was published.

In 1928, he helped Dewan Bahadur Harilal Desai, then a Minister, to pilot the Bombay University Bill in the Bombay Legislative Council. He was also appointed Chairman of the Physical Culture Committee, and a member of the Secondary Education Committee appointed by the Bombay Government.

When Bardoli Satyagraha came, Munshiji resigned from the Bombay Legislative Council on the Bardoli issue but was re-elected. He participated in the negotiations for the settlement which was arrived at between Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the Bombay Government. He was the Chairman of the Bardoli Committee appointed by members of the Legislature to inquire into the allegations of administrative excesses at Bardoli.

In this year, *Kakani Shashi,* a social play, was published.

In 1929, he was appointed Trustee of Bai Kabibai Trust and helped in the reorganisation of the Trust and the Kabibai High School. He was elected a member of the Academic Council and also of the Board of Post-Graduate Studies in the Bombay University.

Putra Samovadi, a pauranic play, and *Dhruvaswamini Devi* a historical play of the Gupta period, were published.

Under his directions *Kakani Shahi* was staged by amateurs and proved a great success.

In 1930, Munshiji joined the Congress on the occasion of the Salt Satyagraha, and his association with Mahatma Gandhi began.

On April 21, 1930, he was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment by the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, for offering Salt Satyagraha at Bhatia Wadi opposite the Victoria Terminus.

Mrs. Munshi was also sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment for civil disobedience.

On release, Munshiji became member of a group, popularly referred to as the "Shadow Cabinet" running the Satyagraha movement in Bombay and Pandit Motilalji also appointed him a substitute member of the Congress Working Committee.

In 1930, Munshiji, along with other friends, founded the Bombay City Ambulance Corps and has been its President since.

In 1931, on the Gandhi-Irwin Truce having been effected, he rejoined practice at the bar. He was elected a member of the B.P.C.C. and A.I.C.C. and continued as such till 1937.

He was also appointed Trustee of Sheth Mansukhlal Chhaganlal Trust.

Sneh Sambhrama, a social play, was published.

On 4th January, 1932, Munshiji was arrested in the anti-Congress Campaign started by Lord Willingdon and detained in Byculla Jail. After some time he was taken to Bijapur and was convicted and sentenced to 2 years rigorous imprisonment by the First Class Magistrate, Bijapur, and kept in custody in Bijapur jail.

Mrs. Munshi was also convicted and sentenced to one year's imprisonment for civil disobedience.

Shishu ane Sakhi, a prose-poem, dealing with the autobiograpical details which brought the Munshis together, was published.

In 1933, Munshiji wrote and, with the permission of the Government of Bombay, published several works. They were *Lopamudra* Part I, a Vedic novel; *Brahmacharyashrama*, a social drama; *Thodank Rasa Darshano*, Literary Studies; *Adivachano*, Addresses Part I; *Narsaiyo*, a biography of Narsinh Mehta and *Lopamudra*, Parts II, III, and VI, Vedic plays.

On 16th December, 1933 he was released from jail and in association with Shri Rangaswami Iyengar started the movement for a parliamentary wing of the Congress, as a result of which the Swaraj Party was founded.

In 1934 the A.I.C.C. accepted parliamentary activities and Munshiji became one of the Secretaries of the Congress Parliamentary Board, Shri B. J. Desai being the General Secretary. He contested election to the Central Legislative Assembly and lost.

In 1935, he evolved a new dramatic medium called 'dance-drama' and directed *Narasaiyo*, the first dance-drama on the Gujarati stage. *Gujarata and Its Literature*, a history of Gujarati Literature, was also published.

He was also elected the Vice-Chairman, Fellowship School Society, and appointed a Trustee of Sheth Kanji Khetsey Charity Trust.

Between 1934 and 1936 the following works of Shri Munshiji were screened by Sagar Movietone:—*Verni Vasulat*, *Dr. Madhurika*, *Be Kharab Jan*, *Kula Vadhu*.

He was also appointed a Director of the Bombay Life Assurance Coy. and the Bombay Fire Assurance Co.

In 1936, Munshiji started The Hans Ltd. which took over the Hindi Magazine *Hans*, for pooling the eminent literary output in the Indian languages through Hindi. He was its editor jointly with Shri Munshi Premchand.

Munshiji was elected Chairman, Board of Directors, Bombay Life Assurance Company Ltd. and the Bombay Fire Assurance Co. Ltd. the first of which office he relinquished on his becoming a Minister in 1937 and the second on the Company's management being changed.

In 1937, he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly under the Government of India Act 1935, from the University Registered Graduates' Constituency.

On 19th July, 1937, he was appointed Home Minister in the first popular Government of Bombay under the new Constitution.

In December 1937, he was elected President of the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad held at Karachi.

In 1938, he was also appointed a Trustee of Sheth Mungalal Goenka Charitable Trusts.

By virtue of his office, he also became the Vice-President of the Children's Aid Society, a society looking after destitute and delinquent children and began its reorganisation. He was also elected President of the Society for the Protection of Children in Western India.

Along with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, he started the Institute of Agriculture at Anand, and was elected its Vice-Chairman.

Along with other Trustees of Sheth Kanji Khetsey Charity Trust he established a Girls' Hostel for College students in Bombay. He also delivered the Thakkar Vissonji Madhavji Research Lectures in the Bombay University on *The Early Aryans in Gujarat*. He founded the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and became its President, and continues to be its President since.

In 1939 he re-organised the Children's Aid Society and established the Children Home at Chembur.

Along with other Trustees of the Bai Kabibai Charitable Trust, he started the Hansraj Morarji Public School at Andheri.

On November 3, 1939, Munshiji resigned from the Home Ministership along with his colleagues in the Congress Ministry. Thereafter he was nominated by the Government of Bombay as the Vice-President of the Children's Aid Society under its new Constitution.

Narmad, a biography of poet Narmad and *Gujaratni Asmita,* essays were published during the year.

In 1940, *Jai Somnath,* a historical novel, dealing with Mahommud Ghazni's invasion of Gujarat was published. *I Follow the Mahatma* was published.
He also started *Social Welfare,* an English Weekly, became its Editor and continues to be so except for the period he was detained in jail.
He was elected the President of the first All-India Penal Reform Conference held in Bombay, and in connection with the activities of the Children's Aid Society, he established the Home for the Mentally Deficient Children.

On December 4, 1940, Munshiji was arrested for individual satyagraha, and detained in the Yeravada Jail with Sardar Patel and others. Smt. Munshi was also arrested for individual satyagraha and detained in the Yeravada Jail.

In March, 1941, he was released from detention on account of serious illness.
Adivachano (Addresses), Part II, was published.

In June, 1941, he resigned from the Congress on the question of the use of violence in self-defence, and went on an all-India tour, lecturing on "Akhand Hindustan".

In January, 1942, *Akhand Hindustan,* a collection of lectures and other articles on the unity of India was published.

In 1943, *Prithvi Vallabha,* was screened by Minerva Movietone.
Along with Shri C. Rajagopalachari and others, Munshiji organised the Leaders' Conference at Delhi for the release of Gandhiji and other leaders.
He undertook the editorship of the series, *Glory That Was Gurjaradesha,* a series of works on the History of Gujarat, planned by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of Mulraj Solanki reign.

In 1944, *Imperial Gurjaras,* (550-1300 A.D.) being Vol. III in the series written by Munshiji, was published.
He was also appointed a trustee of the Krishnarpan Trust;

a Trustee of the All-India Arya Dharma (Hindu) Seva Sangh Trust; and a Trustee of the Singhania Trust

He founded Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti for preparing the History of India by Indians and was elected its Chairman.

In 1945, he inaugurated the All-India Sanskrit Conference, Agra.

Indian Deadlock was published.

Lomaharshini, a Vedic novel, and sequel to *Lopamudra,* was published.

He delivered lectures in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on *Bhagvadgita and Modern Life.*

He was also re-elected Vice-President, Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.

Between 1943 and 1945 Munshiji conducted several important cases connected with the Quit India Movement in different parts of India.

In 1946, as President of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, he founded the Meghji Mathradas Arts College and Narrondas Manordas Institute of Science at Andheri.

He rejoined the Indian National Congress under the advice of Gandhiji.

He was elected President of the Hindu Deen Daya Sangh, Bombay.

He was elected President of the All-India Hindi Sahitya Parishad at the Udaipur Session.

He was elected member of the Constituent Assembly and appointed member of the Experts Committee for drafting the Constitution of India.

He became Chairman, Board of Directors, Akhil Bharat Printers Ltd., and a Director, Devkaran Nanjee Banking Co., Ltd., and Nava-Bharat Publishers Ltd. Patna.

The Ruin That Britain Wrought, The Creative Art of Life and *The Changing Shape of Indian Politics,* were published.

Bhagwan Parashurama, the last of the series of Vedic works, was published, completing a connected series of 11 works dealing with a pre-Mahabharat epic which took him 23 years to complete.

I

ART

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I

Landmark Letters

["The love letters which one writes but does not send are like blind birds which sing their sorrowful song behind the bars of annihilation, instead of carrying afar the consolation of their serenade"—observed once Maurice Dekobra, the novelist. Not so, however, is the case with the letters which an eminent person engaged in varied public activities writes—and sends to important individuals on matters of grave general concern or on occasions fraught with public significance. "Life and Letters" is usually an inescapable chapter in the biography of every public man. For, it is in their letters, sometimes more than in their actions, that they reveal their inmost selves. Munshiji's letters belong to this category, letters which are landmarks in his life. Seven such letters are included in this section, and there is no doubt that they exhibit some of Munshiji's enviable gifts—his patriotic fervour, reformist zeal, dauntless courage, disarming frankness, and facile expression.—Ed.]

I

[This letter of Munshiji, written in the early days of his career as man-of-letters was addressed to his friend Shri Pranlal K. Desai, and indicates a great turning point in his literary and social outlook, and in his evolution in general.—Ed.]

Bombay, 17-7-17.

My Dear P. K.,

I am glad to receive your letter. It is after a long long time that I had the pleasure of receiving your letter. Absorbed in a profession, in no wise less strenuous than indentured labour, and following other pursuits which take away even the few minutes that are left, I have become a very slovenly correspondent. I hope, therefore, that in the matter of correspondence my laxity or silence will be excused.

I must plead guilty to the charge made by the Gnan Mandir man. But he is wrong when he says that any of his bills is outstanding. I am now closing *Bhargava* and the material which is now with him together with the accounts duly signed by the Committee, will make up the final issue. When the accounts are signed, the last issue will be out, and we shall finally pay up his bills.

Regarding *Gujratno Nath,* I admit it is less interesting than *Patanni Prabhuta,* but I am trying to make it a better picture of the times and a better interpretation of my philosophy of the history of Gujarat. I think the characters in this work are more fully developed and all the incidents follow history more faithfully. The true reading of history is that Kumarapala is of the elder branch—vide *Kumarpal Prabandha*—and I think if two authorities differ, I am entitled to prefer the one which suits my story the best. As regards Prasanna being called Kashmiradevi, I have marked all through Gujarati history that a girl after marriage is called by a pompous name ending in Devi. The real name in all cases is quite different.

I am so delighted to learn that people outside Bombay have been taking interest in what I write. It is a gross libel to say that C.N.P. has any hand in my writing. Of course he now corrects the proofs of my short stories which the Sahitya Parishad is going to publish. The Parishad would like to have correct spelling and I am no good hand at it. I don't agree with you when you say that I ought not to keep to the original spelling of the words, in so far as the words I use are Sanskrit. If Gujarati is to be a standard language it must have a standard of spelling too. At the same time I am for freedom of construction, for vigour of style, and for a real genuine note of life at any cost, rather than pedantry.

Yes, the article in *Navajivan* is mine. It would be a revelation to those of my friends who are not in touch with my development during the last five years. I have seen and felt strongly—and, mind you, I have actually worked with a so-called great Reformer—that the preachers of the gospel we call 'Social Reform', are seekers after convenience rather than

students of our social structure; that the 'Reformer's' point of view as regards our caste system lacks historic basis, and is more founded either on fanatic idealism or love of Western life; that a sudden change to what we call 'reformed' notions of life destroys stamina, stuns national dignity and self-confidence, and introduces a puerile mimicry of the West which poisons our very existence. When we were boys at College we were idealists and, thanks to our ridiculous University education, induced in ourselves a belief that the world began—even for us—when Bastille fell or John Mill penned *Liberty*. We knew nothing of our race as it lived and lives.. We cared nothing for the ideals of those whose blood, no amount of University education can prevent running in our veins. You have possibly stuck to the old views, as in the mofussil you are surrounded by the actual miseries of reactionary Hindu social life. I have resiled from these views. I have found that those thoughts which we attributed to the West had never a real place in the West itself. I also see the great havoc which these views have worked in some of our finest men and women. Orthodoxy has some stamina, however narrow: 'Reformism' as we have here, has none or very little. Orthodoxy, if leavened, makes for study, patriotism and proud national consciousness; 'Reform' hangs by a peg which does not exist even in the West, and leads to dilettantism, to the gospel of satisfying the senses at all cost. I have travelled; I have seen various parts of the country where orthodoxy has developed liberal notions on its own lines; and I have seen this wretched class of Indians imbued with Western thought and life abandoning themselves to what is called progress, but which really is nothing more than a race for the man's chance at any cost. If it came to a choice, I think, better by far that the caste system should remain, better by far that orthodoxy should continue than that by a magic wand we should be metamorphosed into denationalised apes of Western viewpoints and modes of life

I wish, and I am sure, the caste system will broaden out and will be destroyed in the end—but not before we have thoroughly preserved the splendid heritage which has survived the shocks of time and merciless history.

I am afraid, I have written at abnormal length. Though I am considered a social reformer, of course in the 'Social Reform Conference' use of the term, it is but due to you that I should not hesitate to place before you the new point of view which I have recently acquired.

If you do not care to have this letter, I would be much obliged if you will return it to me for future use.

Yours sincerely,
K. M. MUNSHI.

II

[*The Bardoli Satyagraha is an inspiring and important chapter of the Gandhian era in Indian politics. It was an event which stirred our nation to its depths, and called forth into action the righteous indignation of even the constitutionally-minded publicmen in our country. This letter of Munshiji reveals how the event roused his sturdy sense of patriotism and public duty, and how he courageously registered his protest against bureaucratic methods in no uncertain terms. Rightly did Mahadeo Desai declare that "this letter sent a thrill through the hearts of all who had any fellow-feeling for their compatriots and placed the Bardoli question in the forefront of all questions engaging public attention".—Ed.*]

17th June, 1928.

Your Excellency,

I am addressing this letter as a matter of painful duty, because I had always thought that Your Excellency's intervention in the Bardoli matters, which some of us were seeking, would result in satisfactorily relieving the situation there.

As Your Excellency knows I would be the last to assist any movement which threatens the existence of constitutional government; but in my humble opinion no Government in its fight even against Civil Disobedience is entitled to refuse to redress the legitimate grievances of the people; to ignore the hardships which innocent victims of the fight have to undergo; or to assume a vindictive attitude. If it does so, a constitutionalist, however determined he may be, is bound to be driven

to the sad necessity of adopting an emphatic mode of expressing his protest.

In the matter of Bardoli assessment, from the commencement, all that the Gujarat members of the Council wanted was an independent official re-inquiry. A request for re-inquiry is by far the mildest form of demand, which the mildest of men can formulate and the least mild of Governments can easily grant. In a case where, as in the case of Bardoli, a report is based on figures which are obviously inaccurate, the most autocratic Government would have been expected to meet this demand as a matter of course. The refusal of this demand has been the cause of this unfortunate trouble.

It may be that the revised assessment may in the end be proved not to be unfair. But even if the assessment has been proper, the fact remains that Your Excellency's Government has adopted an attitude not consonant with any responsible form of civilised government. They have declined a re-inquiry though pressed upon by every person concerned. Satisfied with their own self-conscious generosity, they have refused an opportunity of allowing their own decision to be recognised as just: and, rather than yield, pursued a course which will end in the elimination of the existing agriculturists in Bardoli or in bloodshed, and certainly in widespread disaffection and misery. That such a small issue, viz., the demand for re-inquiry, should be permitted to have such a disproportionate result is, to say the least, only possible in the case of a people so helpless and of a Government so powerful as in India.

From personal investigation I am satisfied that those who are leading the movement in Bardoli are scrupulously averse to importing any political significance into their activities—unless Government drives them to do so. In this case, so far, not even the staunchest non-co-operator has demanded anything but an independent inquiry with an opportunity to the people of the taluka to test Government figures and submit their own. The demand is for being allowed to co-operate in such an inquiry and cannot be considered as anything anti-Government or pro-non-co-operation. But in this case, Government appears to me to be desirous only to crush the non-co-operators who are

organizing the spirit of protest in Bardoli and do not care whether in such a process a few thousand families are crushed out of existence.

It is time that Government came to recognise that as an extreme measure of protest Civil Disobedience—which panic-mongers describe as a seditious movement—has come to stay in the public life of India; that some of the leaders of the movement—however undesirable they may be considered—are the best brains and the noblest souls in this country; and that neither fear nor favour is likely to swerve them from their self-laid path of duty. Under the circumstances it would be wise for Government if they should attempt to inspire people with a confidence in their sense of justice rather than attempt to overawe them by a show or exercise of coercive might.

The cheap sneers of lofty bureaucrats, the extraordinarily severe sentence for technical offences, the thunders of arrogant proclamations and the official sabre-rattling have ceased to excite anything but ridicule, and it is really regrettable that the Government of this Presidency which knew better methods in the highest days of non-co-operation should have permitted itself these obsolete methods, which are not likely to bring credit to Government nor to inspire feelings of loyalty in the people.

As I already wrote to Your Excellency, at the instance of those for whom the penalties of Government have no dread, your Government is compelling the weakest taluka in Gujarat to learn the lessons of Civil Disobedience. Official reports have prevented Your Excellency and Your Excellency's Government, I am afraid, from clearly realizing the situation there.

In a large taluka like Bardoli, with 130 villages and 126,000 acres of arable land, 69 out of 90 *patels* and 11 out of 35 *talatis* have resigned.

There, 80,000 men, women and children are inspired by a determined spirit of organized opposition.

Your *japti* officer has to travel miles before he can get a shave.

Your officer's car which got stuck would have remained in the mud but for Mr. Vallabhbhai, the officially-styled agitator.

Sardar Garda, to whom land worth thousands have been sold for a nominal amount, does not get even a scavanger for his house.

The Collector gets no conveyance on the railway station unless one is given by Mr. Vallabhbhai's sanction.

In a few villages which I visited, not a man, or woman, was either sorry for the attitude or shaken in the faith which he or she had adopted. And as Mr. Vallabhbhai passed through the villages, I saw men, women and children coming out with spontaneous homage; I saw illiterate women, old and young, in their tatters, painting his forehead with the mark of victory; laying at his feet, for their sacred cause, their hard-earned rupee or two and singing in their rustic accents songs of the "misdeeds of the hapless Government."

And I had to confess to myself that the official reports of an artificial agitation forced on unwilling people are, to put it very mildly, grossly inaccurate. Men laugh at your Government's attempts at terrorisation. They have borne well, and are prepared to brave more. The most polite form in which they refer to Mr. Smart is "a tiger with a voracious appetite for buffaloes"; and to the *japti* officer as a "Chhota Commissioner." I dare not put on paper the most modest phrase which they reserve for that enterprising and ambitious Mr. Almaula who, I wish, even in the interests of Government, would be as sober as he is zealous. I am writing this in the hope that personal experience of men like myself may at least awaken in Your Excellency and the members of your Government a desire to make personal investigation. Spirit such as this, it would be unwise even for the British Government to attempt to deride or to crush.

You may reduce 80,000 such determined men, women and children to starvation; you may, if you like, shoot them; but in these parts the prestige of Government for which so much is being said and done does not exist. Prestige is not a thing

which could be commanded but has always to be deserved and earned.

But the issue in Bardoli has, in my opinion, changed. The issue is no longer merely whether an independent re-inquiry should be granted but whether the officials should be allowed to pursue their policy of vindictive enforcement of revenue claims at all costs. The *japti* claims are more in the nature of civil rights, and one would have expected that the process of enforcing them would proceed with the dignity and the conscientiousness of judicial executions. But I regret to have to say that Mr. Smart or whichever official was responsible for it, has taken upon himself the role of a vindictive victor determined to spread the greatest measure of woe, and has only been prevented from carrying out his wishes by a stubborn and organized and, in view of the provocation given, highly self-controlled resistance offered by the people.

For a total assessment of about Rs. 700, one Veerchand has had lands of the value of between Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 40,000 forfeited.

Another lot of 33 acres—any day worth about Rs. 15,000 if not more—belonging to another, was sold for Rs. 161. As if this was not enough, his cooking utensils were attached for Rs. 65, his pair of horses were sold for a nominal sum to a Khandesh Mahomedan and his nephew is being criminally prosecuted for an alleged false declaration.

Cotton worth Rs. 250 was sold for Rs. 21.

For failure to pay Rs. 360, Dorabji had liquor worth about Rs. 2,000 attached and his shop closed. Further attachment followed. Considerable part of the liquor was spilt and lost to the owner, the balance sold for an insignificant amount. And yet out of Rs. 315, Rs. 114-8-6 were still shown as the balance and his lands, said to be worth Rs. 30,000, were forfeited to satisfy this balance.

Cotton purchased and paid for by a ginning factory is forfeited and its sale is threatened on account of the agriculturists who have already been paid off by the factory.

These are but a few instances which I could look into for myself. Innumerable instances of this kind I am prepared to prove before any tribunal.

But this was not enough. Any forfeiture of lands, however, valuable, was considered insufficient to overawe the people, and a campaign was inaugurated against buffaloes, a campaign which has earned for Mr. Smart the derisive epithet of a "Buffalo-Tiger". The *japti* officer's fascination for buffaloes appears to have been extraordinary.

Buffaloes were attached without any inquiry as to their owners. Sometimes buffaloes of non-khatedars were attached, and restored only on payment for detention. Buffaloes belonging to the subjects of Baroda State were attached. A buffalo in the *thana* died for want of care. Another was cruelly beaten to a state of collapse.

Many of the attachments, I heard, were irregular. Very often proper *panchanamas* were not made. No accounts of the property attached have been rendered. Attachments have been levied on exempted articles. I pass over numerous cases of attachments of all sorts of articles, which were sold for a ridiculously low price.

And in order to carry out attachments of buffaloes with due solemnity and terror, the ingenious device of calling in the Pathans was adopted. Thanks to Your Excellency, they are gone now. But that any Government enforcing civil claims should do it with the assistance of a class notorious for its lawless activity is a thing unheard of.

Did anyone in Government consider the moral effect of a *japti* officer, standing before a closed house and asking the Pathan to jump over the hedge or to scale a wall, with instructions to forcibly open the door if it was not open, or to forcibly take possession of any article in the house?

The implications, as I stated before in my letter to Your Excellency, in the employment of Pathans were clear, viz.,

(*a*) that the Government with its vast resources could not get the decent Indians to work out its policy in this matter, and

(*b*) that Government in a small revenue matter like this was prepared to resort to such an unusual agency to carry out its policy.

The Pathan terrorism did not succeed in its objective and the Government got all the discredit for having employed them. And what has been the outcome of these methods?

There are 17,000 khatedars concerned in this matter. They and their families go to make about 40,000 souls. They, between them, have at least about 40,000 buffaloes which are loved by their owners with an affection, the strength of which can only be appreciated by a born agriculturist. In order to save their beloved cattle, 40,000 men, women and children with these cattle have locked themselves up in small and insanitary houses for over three months. As I passed through villages, silent, empty and deserted, with sentinels posted at different ends; as I saw women peeping through the barred window to see whether it was the arrival of the *japti* officer; as on being reassured the doors were opened and I was taken inside; as I saw the darkness, the stench, the filth, and the men, women and children who had herded for months in the same room with their beloved cattle, miserable, ulcerated, grown whitish by disease; and as I heard their determination to remain in that condition for months rather than abandon their cattle to the tender mercies of the *japti* officer, I could not help thinking that the imagination which conceived the dire *japti* methods, the severity which had enforced them and the policy which had sanctioned them, were difficult to be found outside the pages of a history of mediaeval times.

I grieve to say that I learnt the working of the administration of criminal law in these parts with a heavy heart: That the machinery of criminal law should have been brought in to assist in the *japti* campaign is an extraordinary feature.

Nineteen men have so far been given varying sentences most of which, to a man accustomed to the ordinary administration of criminal law, would appear frightful. As for the evidence on which these sentences are based, the less said the better.

A boy was sitting under a tree on a public road at a distance from the compound of the bungalow where the Collector had temporarily put up. The bungalow itself is so far away from the spot that the boy could not see what was passing inside the bungalow, and yet for the high crime of misdemeanour of sitting opposite a public officer's compound to watch the persons who were going in and out, three boys were sentenced each to Rs. 50 fine or in lieu thereof two months' simple imprisonment. And though one of the boys is in jail, within a few days, a buffalo, a calf and a cart belonging to the father of the boy were attached for realizing the fine of Rs. 50.

An old and respected leader of Sarbhon forwarded a copy of the resolution passed by the villagers not to pay assessment to a *nazar* who happened to be the guardian of a ward, owning land in the taluka. I heard that notice has been issued against this man for committing an offence under section 189 of the Penal Code.

Sir, I never gave credence to the stories which were reported till I went to the spot myself and made inquiries personally. After this I have no hesitation in expressing my view that the methods adopted at Bardoli are not worthy of a Government with any pretensions to civilisation.

Apart from the issue of the assessment, these methods have raised another issue. Whether the assessment question is solved or not, it is impossible for anyone with the least notion of dignity or freedom to look on with indifference, when methods such as these are adopted to overawe people whose only crime has been a persistent clamour for the redress of an administrative grievance. Your Excellency and apparently your Government have, with the usual confidence in the man on the spot, declined to believe these reports.

With even the few materials at my disposal I am prepared to prove the facts which I set out above. And, whatever may happen to the question of the Bardoli assessment, methods of this character require to be investigated and exposed.

As citizens of the British Empire, Indians have, with others, the right to see that even law and order are enforced in a lawful and orderly manner.

I am afraid it would be too much to ask Your Excellency's Government to investigate into these methods; but I and others who represent the people of this Presidency cannot look on with equanimity without examining these methods.

I propose to write to a few members of the Legislative Council to assist me in an examination of the methods adopted, and from the little I saw, I can assure Your Excellency that the scrutiny will disclose facts which neither as a British statesman nor as a gentleman, you will be inclined either to justify or exculpate.

Your Excellency has been pleased to ask the assistance of constitutionalists in their fight against Civil Disobedience. The constitutionalists in the Legislative Council, for the sake of their own principle, supported Government up to a point; but permit me to point out that Your Excellency's Government has perfected the policy of a "compartmental" control of the Legislative Council; and with the assistance of the non-politically-minded compartments have reduced the politically-minded compartments to a hopeless unimportance. In all matters, as in this revenue matter, the opinion of the politically-minded groups has been disregarded, their remonstrances ignored, their appeals spurned. Safe in its compartmental control of the Council, your Government have come to believe that to outvote popular groups is to stabilize Government.

May I ask what has been the career of the controversy of the revenue assessment? The Joint Parliamentary Committee proposed that the main principles by which land revenue is determined, should be brought under the control of the Legislative Council. In 1924, the Legislative Council, by a majority, resolved that new assessment should not be levied till such a legislation has been brought into effect. In 1927, the Council again resolved not to collect the enhanced assessment pending such legislation. The Revenue Assessment Committee proposed an advisory committee of the Legislative Council. And yet when the Hon. Members of the Council for the Surat District, my friends Rao Bahadur Naik and Mr. Shivdasani, concentrated their attack on Mr. Anderson's transparently inaccurate report, their complaints were dismissed with a lofty contempt.

Their private entreaties failed. By a sheer accident we could get a few minutes to discuss Bardoli in the Budget debate and all that we got in return was the garrulous levity of the Settlement Officer, whose boasted accuracy has become the laughing-stock of the Presidency. We went to vote, and our Government with their usual skill in compartmental control succeeded for the time being in showing to the world that the politically-minded constitutionalists in the Council did not represent the view of the Council or the Presidency. The vote so obtained has become so conveniently sacred that Government which defied the old resolutions when they represented popular opinion, now cannot so much as forget it, and even Lord Winterton has learnt to swear by it. And now when the Bardoli people have tenaciously launched a campaign of Civil Disobedience, when they are proving that our attitude in the Council was not only right, but representative, backed by an overwhelming opinion in the Presidency, when they have exploded the hollowness of the vote which your Government manoeuvred in securing in the Council, when as a result of their activity your Goverment will have to grant more than what we in our wildest moment in last February dreamt of obtaining from your Government, it will be less than human if in this struggle our sympathy or confidence can remain with your Government. If today in this struggle, no constitutionalist worth the name can stand by your Government, the policy of your Government which has considered the politically-minded groups in the Council as a nuisance to be suffered and outvoted is alone responsible for it.

What Rao Bahadur Naik wanted in February last, what he and Rao Saheb Dadubhai demanded in May last, if given then, would have been hailed with delight and made us feel that Government was ours; if what was demanded then was offered or given now, it would be rejected with scorn and contempt by persons who have outgrown the methods which we tried and whether your Government now concedes or coerces, it is not as Government which is either genuinely sympathetic; or which we can by any stretch of imagination call ours.

Sir, I approached you on Sunday last in the earnest hope that at least the repressive measures would be suspended and an impartial inquiry ordered. My hopes do not appear to have been well-founded. I learnt at Bardoli that over 280 armed police were going to be drafted at Bardoli. Four Special Magistrates and Mr. Healy as a Special Superintendent are henceforth to control the destinies of the Bardoli people. In view of this attitude and in view of the circumstances I found at Bardoli, I would be untrue to the position of a representative of the graduates in the Presidency, if I did not invite them to give me a mandate on the following issues:

(*a*) whether the Bardoli people are not entitled to an independent and open re-inquiry.
(*b*) whether pending such inquiry recovery of enhanced assessment should not be suspended.
(*c*) whether Government is justified in the methods it has adopted in recovering *japti* claims.

In pre-Morley-Minto Government, Sir Gokuldas Parekh, a member of the then Legislative Council, could get an open inquiry into the revenue matters. In pre-Reform Government with one Indian member and with Morley-Minto Council, Kaira was dealt with sympathetically in spite of Civil Disobedience.

In a cabniet with five Indians and a "responsible" Government, we are helpless. The Bombay Legislative Council is a representative institution where the voice of the representatives of the majority of people is invariably derided and overridden. Your Excellency and Earl Winterton both relied upon the vote of this Legislative Council; and the only reply which lies in my power is to resign my seat in the Council and to appeal to my Presidency-wide constituency to indicate their verdict on these issues. It is but just that in these extraordinary circumstances, I should only represent a constituency which appreciates the woes of Bardoli with the same intensity as I do.

In closing, I may thankfully note the extreme courtesy and sympathy which you have always exhibited towards Bardoli as well as to those like me who tried to represent its cause. But in a system of Government like ours, which is

neither national nor personal, sympathy, even of the Head of Government, is as ineffective as the wishes of the people.

K. M. MUNSHI.

III

[*In 1933, Munshiji, wrote his* GUJARATA AND ITS LITERATURE, *in jail, but in order to complete the work, he requested Prof. I. J. S. Taraporevala to write a chapter on his literary works. Before he did so, and at his request, Munshiji wrote him a letter giving him his own view of some of the aspects of his art. A part of this letter is reproduced below.—Ed.*]

Bijapur Jail,
(Some time in 1933).

My Dear Taraporevala,

In my early years I never had the benefit of a regular study of the Gujarati language. And since I began to write in Gujarati, I had for the purpose, to steal hurried moments out of a busy life devoted to more than one absorbing activity. These circumstances often make me unconscious of my lapses in grammar, syntax and spelling. No one is more painfully conscious of these unforgivable blemishes than I am. But I could not postpone literary work till I got moments of leisure, for such a good fortune was not likely to come my way; and this work was not only recreation but an inspiration and a shaping influence. Most of my works have a nucleus of personal experience. They also have a value when they were written of being the formative training for overcoming a weakness or going a step towards a higher evolution.

In the beginning my style, I think, contributed considerably to the appeal of my works. My familiarity with Gujarati literature was indeed scant, when the temperamental imperative impelled me to seek self-expression through fiction. My favourite authors, Carlyle, De Quincey and Landor among the English, and Hugo, Michelet and Alexandre Dumas among the French had, unconsciously, furnished me the models on which to build the technique of my style, such as it was at first. And at first, its resources had to be drawn from the little Samskrit

I knew, and from the different varieties of colloquial Gujarati prevailing in Surat, Broach and Bombay. These regions have supplied to my style their racy elements which so horrify the purist from the north Gujarat. During the last thirty-five years, however, I have with varying success, attempted many and varying notes which Gujarati prose can possibly be made to yield; though it must be admitted that I have failed to achieve a style with lyric touch or intellectual power, stately dignity or simple grace. Sometimes a dazzling brilliance of language hides my meaning. Abruptness of expression, on occasions, leaves the thought vague or incomplete. A desire for sustaining breathless interest has often deprived my style of the grace of rhythmic syllabic movement. But the wide range of expression which I have attempted, will perhaps point the way to fresh and more successful experiments. And the varieties of style for instance, of the narrative, the dramatic and the picturesque in which I have attained some measure of success will offer to the authors of the future fields for yet greater triumphs.

The principal features which I brought to fiction in Gujarati were an interesting story, dramatic situation and dialogue and living characters. I was, and am still, first and foremost a story-teller, not a moralist; and had before me the art of the greatest story-teller in the world's literature, Alexandre Dumas. My stories, as critics have repeatedly observed, move with breathless interest. In *Patanni Prabhuta* and *Prithvi Vallabh* the main plot occupies no more than a fortnight. The situations generally are full of dramatic possibility and the dialogue unfolding character swiftly carried forward the action.

My principal effort has always been to restrict myself to painting human beings; not saints; nor the conventional dummies so beloved of prudes and schoolmasters, nor pale abstractions but full-blooded men and women who love and fight and sin and struggle as in actual life. My practical concern was the real drama of life, neither theories of life nor morals. In spite of the past three decades of effort on the part of the critics to teach me the contrary I have found it impossible to look upon a historical novel as anything but a romantic speculation. A bygone age, as it actually was, can never be created

by a literary artist. He can treat the past either as an alien world and its men but myths, and occupy himself with hauling its upholstery into the present; or he can project the drama of life around him on the screen of the past. As I have understood it, the art of Kalidasa and Shakespeare, of Scott, Hugo and Dumas is of the latter variety. And with my limited powers, I have always endeavoured to keep the ideal of this art before me and scrupulously discarded wooden dolls for human beings. Even the venerable figures of Puranic mythology have been kept rooted to the earth, though characters like Prithvi Vallabh, the gay warrior, Lopa Mudra, the embodiment of triumphant beauty, have like the statues of Phedias, more than mortal stature. This enabled me to attempt to keep my characters human, with some success, to bring the historic romance into close correspondence with life. Romanticism, I felt, was too much in the clouds and those also rather woolly.

A still stronger realism characterised my social novels and dramas. From Jasubha, the light-hearted Indian Prince in *Verni Vasulata* to Indrajita the weak schoolmaster and Shashi the new woman in *Kakani Shashi* and Joito, the petty Mehta in *Ajnankita* and Dhankore, the jealous and loving wife in *Peeda Grasta Professor* scarcely any one of my characters is untrue to life. The situation, sometimes, has a tendency to be strained, but rarely unnatural. This tendency to sound the realistic note has kept me away from dealing with village with which I have not been in intimate touch.

Another feature of my literary art, is perhaps my inordinate tendency to depict a clash between men and women of power and ambition with dramatic intensity. Such intensity is naturally produced when persons feel strongly, express boldly and act decisively. There are, no doubt, in the picture gallery characters, like Rama in *Verni Vasulata*, who obliterate themselves or yield sweetly, and many who are weak, foolish or pompous, but their outlines are scarcely as striking. I lacked the touch which produces men and women with softer shades of character. The dominant note of many of my works is love, not a thing to be talked of with a hushed voice or stifled by conventional situations or poetic phrases; but love, as in actual life, bestriding

the world, leaving footprints in tears, in blood, in defiance of moral precepts, sanctimonious humbugs and cold-blooded prudes. I have tried to view it through a great number of varying situations mostly taken from life; and through its weakness and strength, its anguish and turmoil and tragedy, its sublime surrender and no less glorious joy, portray its dynamic force. I have done it in the belief that in its frank delineation alone lies its poetry and glory, and its only chance of escape from sordidness and vulgarity. In pursuing this idea, I have been guilty of offending against the literary conventions of this country. But life, in its reality alone, is sacred to me; not so much the laws made to bind it.

I am afraid I have been unconventional in yet one more respect. I have great piquant situations, like the rowdy feast of intoxicated collegians in *Swapnadrishta;* or the strange experiences of a man and woman, perfect strangers, locked up in the same bedroom by the mistake of the host that they were man and wife in the short story *Kamachalau Dharmapatni* (The Temporary Wife). I am afraid, I have flippantly and maliciously dealt with those who imagine that they have mastered sexual self-control, in *Brahmacharyashrama*, where political prisoners take the vow of continence in jail, and end by wrangling over a village girl.

Few critics, indeed, have disputed the art with which such incidents have been told; but the choice of such subjects for literary handling has been disapproved. Not subscribing to the canons of literary respectability laid down by some mediæval moralists it has not been possible for me to place any barrier to my choice of a situation, so long as it has artistic possibilities. A jolly good laugh or even malicious fun, may be at the expense of a venerable thing, is too precious a thing in life, to be missed even in literature.

Yours sincerely,
K. M. MUNSHI.



Munshiji and Smt. Atilaxmi (first wife) in London (1923)

IV

'PROHIBITION'

[*When the Congress accepted office for the first time in* 1937, *it made Prohibition one of its immediate major activities. In Bombay, part of the opposition to this scheme came from the Parsis. Munshiji, as the then Home Minister in the Government of Bombay, was a vigorous advocate of the Prohibition plan. In this letter, addressed to a Parsi friend, Munshiji successfully smashes the specious arguments of anti-prohibitionists. This was originally published in the* FREE PRESS JOURNAL *of* 13*th June* 1939.—*Ed.*]

Dear Friend,

Your letter............to hand. Like you, many Parsis known and unknown have been writing to me placing their points of view. Anonymous and spicy letters are also sent. As your queries are the most expressive of what is troubling the ordinary Parsi, I venture to reply through the Press.

I trust you will appreciate this frank reply to your "frank" letter, as you say it is. I am not surprised that you felt pained at the ugly exhibition at the Cowasji Jehangir Hall. Every decent Parsi would feel both pained and humiliated.

Your first question is:

> "If you are really so keen on enforcing Total Prohibition within 2 years of your coming into power, why did you leave it entirely out of your Election Manifesto?"

The Congress has been keen on Prohibition since 1919. It was a principal plank in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. It formed an important item in the decisions at the Karachi Congress of 1931, which were widely published during the elections of 1937. It formed part of the Independence Pledge of 1935 which was adopted from thousands of platforms year after year. Is it suggested that the item was omitted from the Manifesto with a view to give up the reform?

Again, your underlying idea that a Government should not do anything not put forward in an Election Manifesto is far from correct.

Prohibition in principle and as a goal to be worked upto, was accepted by the Bombay Government in 1925 when Sir Cowasji Jehangir was a member of the Government, and has not been given up since. It is now accepted by an overwhelming majority of the Bombay Legislature. Those who spoke against Prohibition in the Legislature, were the first to realise and to confess that "their voice was like a cry in the wilderness". There is, therefore, no constitutional or moral objection to the adoption of the reform.

Your second question is:

> "Do you honestly believe the Parsis would have voted by the thousands for Congress candidates, had Prohibition been mentioned?"

Parsis, who were Congressmen, were already pledged to Prohibition. Non-Congress Parsis did not vote for any Manifesto or any party, but only for the individual candidate whose personal merits they fancied. And when such an individual was a Congressman, they did it with the knowledge that the Congress was pledged to Prohibition and had picketed liquor shops during the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Your third question is:

> "Are you in favour of Racial discrimination? Do you want the Europeans to enjoy certain privileges which you and I cannot? Do you want to destroy the special atmosphere of clubs like the Willingdon Sports Club and C.C.I. which have been founded to bring all communities together? All club members must be on the same footing and enjoy equal rights and privileges. Then why are you creating an atmosphere whereby the English member can order a drink and I cannot even if I want to?"

The permit to drink which is to be given to a European is not a privilege but an allowance made to a foreigner who has been born, and is to retire and live, in non-Asiatic countries where drink does not offend the moral sense of the bulk of the population.

Parsis are children of the soil and they enjoy the privileges and have to bear the responsibilities attached to that position. And as Indians they should not clamour for conces-

sion which a large majority of their countrymen consider immoral. There is going to be no racial discrimination in mixed clubs as neither a European nor an Indian is going to get a drink there.

Your fourth question is:

> "You said last night, we Parsis are a "great" race. If after indulging in alcoholic drinks for 1,300 years we can be called a "great" race by you, then I ask you how can you convince anyone by saying that the habit of drink is degenerating to the mind and body? Anything done in excess is injurious to the health, whether you over-eat, over-drink, over-work or over-exercise. The question is whether drinking in moderation is any menace to society."

Your question is a little difficult to understand. I said that the Parsis are a "great" race; but I have not said that it has the habit of drink. Among your community not more than 10 per cent at the highest drink alcohol as a matter of habit; in a city like Ahmedabad, only 197 out of about 2,500 Parsis obtained licences for drink last year. Of these 10 per cent a large section takes alcohol only in small quantities, and more as a fashion than a necessity. But that there are many among Parsis who have ruined their lives and fortunes after drink is also unfortunately true. Their number may not be large, as the community is small and educated. But Government cannot look upon this question from the point of view of a fraction of the people of the Province. Among the Hindus and Muslims, a few well-to-do drink out of fashion or addiction; but among the poor, hundreds of families are ruined by drink.

To introduce Prohibition is, therefore, to upset the habit of a few hundreds to save thousands of families from crime, starvation and disease; not to do it would be to destroy many so that a few may enjoy a questionable luxury. Drinking in moderation by a few is a menace to society if it relaxes the moral scruples of the many and leads them to ruin.

Your fifth question is:

> "You said that "alcoholism had destroyed the best bodies and the finest brains in the world." If so, then how did our communtiy produce great men like Dadabhoy

Naoroji, Sir Phirozshah Mehta, Jamshedji Tata and many others? How did England produce such great statesmen as Lord Birkenhead, Gladstone, Asquith and many others who were reputed to deliver some of their best and outstanding speeches on the floor of the House after partaking a lot of alcohol?"

Your question presupposes that Parsis are suffering from alcoholism. No one said that, and it would be incorrect to say it. It would shock those who knew or respect Gladstone or Asquith to be told that they delivered their best speeches as a result of "partaking a lot of alcohol". And Birkenhead was brilliant not because of, but in spite of drink. You will see that such anti-Prohibition arguments are based upon club gossips which have no basis. But I know of a Parsi friend, who has one of the keenest intellects in the City. He would have been leading not only his little world in Bombay as he does today, but the whole of India, had it not been for drink. And there are many such.

Your sixth question is:

"You said 'no one ever felt sorry for having given up drink'. Bombay is the second city of the British Empire. We have been provided with good entertainment by our Taj Mahal Hotel of which we had reason to be proud. With the advent of Prohibition this Hotel can never afford to pay the fees of international artists and performers. So that you want to make this great city one of all work and no play and make us all feel dull. Don't you think then we will feel sorry for giving up drinks?"

You take for granted that there would not be dinners, dances or social amenities of any kind if drink is denied at hotels and clubs. It arises from a purely Western obsession that happiness depends upon a peg of whisky or a glass of sherry in the evening. It is the main reason for the popularity of alcohol wherever this obsession has spread. If this assumption were correct, it would mean that alcohol—the drug—alone is the source of all social joys, that those races which do not drink have no such joys, that human beings are social because of drink! Don't you think the claim is preposterous?

International artists and performers are not employed with the proceeds of drink, but out of the excess profits made by the sale of drink. People pay for such joys by paying more for a glass of drink than its actual cost. Those who love dance and art can similarly pay more for a glass of milk or pay extra charges for those attractions and would not be sorry for the loss of drink. To maintain costly places of pleasure out of the excess profits of the drink trade may be in vogue, but it can hardly be called an admirable feature of our modern life; and if it goes none need be sorry for it. But here again you try to judge the question by the so-called needs of a few upper class rich. Cannot they ever feel happy at the thought that loss of a little personal excitement will save thousands from vice and crime and ruin?

Your seventh question is:

> "You said 'our manhood is destroyed by the corrosive influence of alcohol.' Then how is it that we Parsis for years together were much superior to the Hindus and Mahomedans in every sphere of sport in spite of our small number? How is it that we are at the top in such items as Cycling, Swimming, Flying—all of which call for great physical strain? Only recently when the Aga Khan offered a cup for the first Indian to fly solo to India from England, it took a Parsi pilot to be the first in both directions—A. Engineer, the winner from Europe to India and J.R.D. Tata second from India to Europe."

You assume that Parsis as a community are under the influence of drink and that they are superior to Hindus and Muslims in sport—which I feel is an absurd claim—because they drink and the others do not. I do not know Mr. Engineer; I know Mr. J. R. D. Tata a little: and I am sure they won't thank you for maintaining that their skill or nerve is the product of alcohol.

But have you gone out of your clubs and seen how the farmer's son from upcountry comes to Bombay in the flush of youth and goes back to die as a victim of alcoholism?

Your eighth question is:

> "You say the purchasing power of Bombay would increase by Rs. 3 crores. But of this 3 crores how much

would represent the money of the labourers, the middle class and the rich? Have you ascertained that? If over 2 crores of this is saved by the middle class and the rich Indians and Europeans, how is it going to bring comforts to those who did not have them today?"

Whilst it is difficult to divide intoxicants into poor man's and rich man's drinks, it may serve our purpose to agree that country liquor, toddy, hemp drugs, opium and cheap foreign liquor (Indian made) are used by the poor and lower middle classes. The upper middle and upper classes use mainly foreign liquor.

Revenue derived by Government from the Bombay City under the following heads is Rs. 91.87 lakhs.

Country liquor	....	58.00 lakhs
Toddy	....	10.38 „
Hemp drugs	....	4.96 „
Opium	....	1.09 „
Foreign liquor (Indian made)	..	8.43 „
		91.87 „

This is drawn from the poor and lower middle classes. And to this the overhead charges viz. rent, wages, profits of the trade etc. which must be at least about a crore. The drink bill of the poor is therefore nearly Rs. 2 crores.

From foreign liquor, this Government derives a revenue of 15.60 lakhs, and the Central Government takes approximately 34.16 lakhs making a total of 49.76 or say roughly fifty lakhs. To this add the cost of manufacture and the profits of the brewing or distilling firms in foreign lands (such firms pay a large dividend) the costs, insurance and freight for shipment to Bombay and the cost of establishment and profits of the wholesalers and retailers and one can roughly say that the drink bill of the upper middle and the rich in Bombay City amounts to not less than a crore and half.

This, of course, does not take into account the cost of industrial inefficiency, crime, vice and disease that follow in the wake of the drink traffic. You have only to look at the conditions in Ahmedabad or to read the report of the Madras in-

quiry into Salem to see how industrial efficiency increases with prohibition.

Prohibition will, therefore, increase the purchasing power of Bombay by about Rs. 3 crores and 50 lakhs every year. Would not this money be used in buying greater comforts? If you study the facts about Ahmedabad, you will see that the increase in comforts derived from Prohibition is a proved fact.

Your ninth question is:

> "You said that in Ahmedabad out of a total population of about 2,500 Parsis including men, women and children, only 175 applied for permits, which makes you believe that only a very small number of Parsis indulge in the "drink habit". If you really believe this is true, then why not try the experiment in Bombay? Why not take the census of Parsis in Bombay who would like to drink and who would not like to drink? If only a small number sign up for drinking then you have won your battle against the anti-Prohibitionists."

The figures of Ahmedabad speak for themselves. 197 permits were issued from among about 2,500 Parsis. We tried this experiment in Ahmedabad last year because we had no experience. Our experience tells us that the permit system weakens the moral backbone of prohibition. In Ahmedabad, the whole Committee consisting of even Parsi members want complete prohibition. We have, therefore, come to the conclusion that in the interests of the whole population of the Province, prohibition must come within three years. We have now passed the experimental stage. The drink habit which British connection has given us, is a moral lapse from an old Indian code, and has to go, and the reform cannot wait because some with Bachannalian propensities are not willing to give it up. No reform would be possible on those conditions.

Your question No. 10 is:

> "You said you knew the Parsis for over 25 years and you had many good Parsi friends. Then when the Parsis are pleading with you so earnestly why do you turn a deaf ear to them? And so create unpleasantness and ill-feeling between us? I appeal to you as your well-wisher and friend not to be stubborn and defy the wishes and prayers of my

community. I appeal to you as a friend to listen to us and to grant us our humble requests, instead of using indiscriminately your powers against us. I implore you to grant the Parsis permits as in the case of Europeans and non-Asiatics.''

I did not merely 'say' that I had Parsi friends; I have. In my native town, my family was on the friendliest terms with leading Parsi families for generations. In Bombay, I have many Parsi friends. I have lived amongst them for years. And I know their feeling well.

The Parsis are ranged in different groups on this question. The first group consists of those who do not drink or drink on occasions. They are not sorry that prohibition is coming. The second group consists of those who take a little of drink, and would give it up if Government want prohibition to be introduced, may be with a little regret.

The third group is of those who would not mind prohibition at all, but who are fed on the assiduously circulated notion that if prohibition came Parsis would be reduced to poverty. This notion is false. Parsis are rich by reason of their education, enterprise and tact, not because they traffic in drink.

In Bombay City, there are 633 liquor and toddy licences; out of them 360 are owned by Parsis. Quite a large section of these Parsis are wealthy or have other sources of income. As to employees in these shops, by far a large number are Hindus. So far as our inquiries go at present, the actual figure of Parsi wage earners who will lose employment will be round about 400.

The dread of substantial unemployment among Parsis, therefore, is entirely unfounded. But even if it were not, I would venture to say that reform and progress mean readjustment. Such readjustment always temporarily affects certain aspects of economic life and throws some persons out of employment. Shall we, therefore, make no progress, introduce no reform? When opium was banned—and that movement of prohibition was then led among others by many Parsis—many Hindu firms became insolvents. Did they clamour for compensation? Did they break up meetings?

The fourth group is of a few westernised Parsis who have hypnotised themselves into the belief that they are more European than the Europeans themselves. They have now wakened up to the fact that they are Indians with an Indian's duty and responsibility. This has hit their *amour propre.* But the psychological lens will soon be adjusted. Their place is with the Hindus and Muslims of this country. They cannot have the privileges of Indians and the amenities of foreigners at the same time.

The fifth group is of those interested in the liquor and toddy trade. They are few, wealthy and well-placed. They are naturally against this; all vested interests resent change. The sixth group is of those who desire to retain their place and popularity in the community by heading an agitation for fear that if they did not they would lose their leadership. I and II groups far outnumber groups III, IV, V and VI.

Yours sincerely,
K. M. MUNSHI.

V

[*World War II placed India in an unenviable position. Realising this, many of our national leaders—including Gandhiji—offered the hand of friendship to Britain, asking in return nothing but Britain's unequivocal declaration of India's independence. In tune with this spirit, Munshiji addressed this letter to Sir Roger Lumley, the then Governor of Bombay. That the letter went unheeded is no surprise. All the same, its importance is not less. It exhibits Munshiji's fine acumen in analysing the contemporary political situation, his unerring grasp of the fundamentals, his unswerving nationalism, and his courage in expressing his convictions.—Ed.*]

Khandala, 8th June, 1940.

Your Excellency,

Apropos of our conversation on the 5th I am submitting my note on the present situation.

I was unable to respond to your kind invitation to participate in the war efforts you are making. But I felt that in discharge of my own duty to my country I should not, at this

time, render myself so disabled as not to place my views before you—and before H. E. the Viceroy through you—and thus render what I conceive to be real war service at this time.

You know how the allied reverses have affected me; how when in Office, I had looked forward to Britain and India fighting the war as partners; how anxiously I have followed the catastrophic events in Europe since May 10th; and therefore I trust that you will forgive me the frankness with which I have dealt with the problems in the note.

The note is defective in several particulars, but I hope you will understand that it comes from a sincere friend of Britain who would, if he could, help, may be to a very insignificant extent, to save her from pursuing a policy in India, which I feel is likely to spell disaster for both the countries concerned.

I hope Lady Lumley has returned safe and is well.

With kindest regards to both of you from Mrs. Munshi and myself.

Yours sincerely,
K. M. MUNSHI.

NOTE ON THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. The policy of British in India, so far, has been without imagination, and has consisted in maintaining the *status quo* and in taking the initiative only when action becomes obligatory —when they are driven into the corner. This has arisen from the following: (a) The self-complacency of the British Official mind, which believes that the British luck would carry them through every crisis, and has, therefore, lost the capacity of taking decisive action. (b) Caution which generally takes the form of fear lest any change should alter things for the worse. (c) The red-tapism which pervades the administration so rigidly that the whole truth about the country ordinarily does not reach those who have to adjudge policies.

2. The features of the *status quo* policy for some years past have been the following: (a) to distrust the Congress as an enemy of British interests; (b) to encourage Muslims to be a counter-weight to Hindus; (c) to induce the Indian States

to be a counter-weight to British India in the Federal Scheme; (d) to get the Europeans in India to take a greater part in public life so as to maintain the balance of power wherever they can, as in Bengal; (e) to introduce the Act of 1935, which with its checks and counter-checks was calculated to keep India safe for Britain for a few generations. To-day the whole policy has failed, and the intention to enforce the whole Act of 1935 is formally given up.

3. The distrusted Congress had to be accepted as a partner by compulsion, when it accepted office; and when it left office the Act of 1935 was gone with it.

4. The Muslims—outside its Nationalist section,—encouraged to hope for a favoured treatment are refractory. States (like........) in spite of their vaunted loyalty to the British, are financing and influencing separatist tendencies amongst the Muslims. The principal props of British policies like .... are no longer useful. Mr. Jinnah, in spite of his cryptic utterances as regards the British rule, is unfriendly; and his two-nation theory is as much a counter-blast to British-imposed unity in India as to the national unity which Congress covets.

5. The States have equally frustrated the British policy. The theory of 'sovereignty' *qua* British-India discovered during the Round Table Conferences has made them assertive and ambitious, making the working of Paramountcy difficult. They have also done their best to destroy the Federal Scheme for they were taught by the British to talk in terms of 'sovereignty', which *qua* the British simply does not exist.

6. The Britishers in India have failed to occupy any key position. Even in Bengal where they were expected to work wonders, they have not been able to secure any proper standard of administration; and have been laid on the shelf by the recent Huq-Bose *rapprochement*.

7. The policy was foredoomed to frustration, first, by its failure to recognise the important fact that by the very nature of things the only two sections which were interested in keeping India together were the British and the Nationalist; and Secondly, by its failure to anticipate that only the Nationalist alone when he gains the control of government can bind his

country to Britain by genuine bonds of self-interest, as in the cases of Ireland and Egypt.

8. With this failure on hand, however, an entirely unexpected international situation has now come into existence. Occupation of British is not a possibility, but a near probability. This would involve the important result that India, like Dutch Indies may have to shift for itself as a more or less isolated fragment of the British Empire, without any substantial help from Britain in men, money or war materials.

9. The military equipment of India without help from Britain and without spontaneous effort of Indians on a large scale may be just enough to keep internal peace. Against any European power or Japan, by itself and as at present, it is entirely inadequate.

10. At the same time the present war situation must have had great repercussions on India's neighbours. In the immediate future, their attitude will have considerable influence on the Indian situation.

11. Western diplomacy in China even before the war was impotent without American support; and with war pre-occupations of Britain and France, Japan is bound to dominate the Chinese situation. Indications are not lacking that Stalin may any day come to a settlement with Japan on the Chinese questions. The recent agreement to cease fighting on the outer Mongolian-Manchuko frontier; to continue the old fishery compact for one year; and to open trade talks are sufficient danger signals. Stalin, if he gets other fields of activity, may even sell out China. International observers are discussing it as a distinct possibility.

12. Turkey is pro-British. But it had friendly relations with Germany since the Great War. Russia is bound to her by self-interest. Hanoum Halide Edib, a very shrewd observer of Turkey, observed two months ago that Turkey had to ally herself with England and France because they could restrain German as well as Russian imperialistic expansion in the near East. But suppose they are not able to restrain, what then?

13. Afghanistan can always be relied upon to be a difficult neighbour. Possibly those in authority know things more

in detail. But Indian Communists have always been looking in that direction for some months and I don't think they have ceased to do so now. I do not know much about Iran and the Arabic Kingdoms. The Saadabad Pact, however, between Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, may develop sinister aspects in a conceivable Asian crisis.

14. These following contingencies may conceivably occur; (A) Italy may enter war and render the Arabian Sea difficult. (B) With England and France struggling for their very life Stalin may leave China to Japan and think in terms of other countries like Afghanistan and India. (C) Germany may try to convert the Near-East Muslim block into a pro-Nazi ally and that way try to penetrate into India. Any one or more of the contingencies may occur at one time. As things are at present, contingency (A) by itself may not be serious; it can only be dangerous if it is co-ordinated with (B) and (C).

15. The only way to meet these dangers is to transform the present Government of India into an Indian Government backed by the enthusiasm of the whole country which could organise its resources and strength in a few months. Then alone India can be a stabilising pro-British force in Asia.

16. In order to achieve such transformation of the present Government of India the Indian situation must be viewed with reference to—

(1) The British supporters
  (a) Princes, and
  (b) Dependants.
(2) The Nationalists.
(3) The Communal Muslims.
(4) The Extremists.
(5) The Turbulents.
(6) The Helpless.

I have included the Hindu Mahasbahaites, the Liberals and minorities like the Indian Christians among Nationalists, for, whatever their differences with the Congress, they are for a united India, for Nationalism and Democracy, and for the establishment of a popular Government at the centre.

17. The Princes of India have only one object; dynastic ambition. They have existed through centuries by adroit alliances with those who happen, or are likely, to establish imperial power in the country. Many of them won over the Muslim invaders by accepting Islam or, by remaining Hindus and entering into matrimonial alliances, which were regarded as the depth of degradation in those days. They won over the British by huge monetary subsidies in all shapes, and recently by being helpful instruments against Nationalist India. But it must not be forgotten that when their dynastic ambitions were thought to be in jeopardy they decided to sabotage the federal scheme.

18. The Princes will help the British with money; they may supply men; but very soon this form of loyalty will not be ungrudging—even if it has not already reached that point. They cannot energize India. And the instinct of dynastic self-preservation may at any moment destroy their will to help or resist, *unless*, in some form or other, they are firmly held in an unyielding Indian framework.

19. As to the Dependants, in them I include all those who have acquired prestige, wealth or position by an uncritical support of British rule and the very small minorities. But their number is small and their influence in the country, very limited. The loss of British prestige all over the world during these years and their recent reverses have already been leading them to doubt whether the British star by which they were navigating so far is not a falling meteor soon to be extinguished.

20. The Nationalists, the largest and the most highly organised group in India, have only one ambition, to have a free nation-state for India. When the war started they were anxious to be taken into partnership with Britain and as partners to mobilise the resources of the country for waging the war. But ten months have been slowly bringing the conviction to some amongst them that there is little hope for a National Government till Britain is broken.

21. The teaching of organised inaction which Gandhiji has created has produced most unexpected results. (a) It has been a living testimony before the world that the British are

not fighting for anything except their own power. Many American papers in U.S.A. for instance have been outspoken about it. (b) It has succeeded in confirming the impression in India that the war is not waged in Indian interests but for British interests in India. (c) It has made and will make the war effort of the Government in India ineffective. (d) It has successfully defeated Mr. Jinnah's attempt to blackmail the Congress into giving his League a predominating position in the affairs of the country. (e) It has reduced the Government in seven provinces to an irresponsible bureaucracy and reduced the Provincial Governments to marking time and administering Defence of India Act. (f) It has given to the Nationalists the happy position of a spectator, thus leaving them free to form their programme in any international crisis.

22. There are some, inside the Congress and outside, who have already begun to feel that there is no use making any attempt to deal with British at this stage as the country is not likely to be worse under any other regime. It is being increasingly felt that any foreign power hoping to acquire India, more likely than not, will make it its object to free India from British Imperialism, and the consequent position may not be worse.

23. The bulk of the Muslims of India—outside its nationalist section—the bulk of whom though ignorant are capable of great collective energy under the influence of a religious urge. It may express itself in (a) local disorders; (b) attempts to overawe authority; (c) refusal to resist any outside Muslim power; or (d) a powerful movement in sympathy with Muslims of the neighbouring countries.

24. The Muslim League started with the object of securing for the community more than its legitimate share in any power which the Congress might succeed in getting for the country. The importance which the Viceroy gave Mr. Jinnah; the latter's attack on Congress Ministers as anti-Muslim when every Governor concerned knew that there was no truth in it; and the proposal of coalition Ministries, claimed to have emanated from the Viceroy, gave the League an impression that its object was within sight. When Gandhiji evolved organised inaction, Mr. Jinnah, frustrated in his attempt, resorted to his

two-nation theory. Many think that it is a lever for extracting the desired objective in any settlement. But the idea is in the market, and the man who issued the scrip may not be able to control its circulation. From that idea to a Muslim State in some sort of standing alliance with the parties to the Saadabad Pact is but a step.

25. The Khaksārs may not be left out of consideration. Armed resistance to authority by an organised Muslim party has entered practical politics. The Government of India which let it embarrass the Congress U. P. Government is now seriously alarmed at its strength. They have destroyed the influence of Government's most important Muslim supporter, Sir Sikandar, in the Punjab itself.

26. The Muslim Communalists, therefore, are not likely to ally themselves unreservedly with the British. If they do so, it will be at such an absurd price that the Nationalists and the Hindus will have nothing left to hope for except in the disappearance of the British rule from India.

27. The Extremists have their sympathy for Russia or Germany as they see in them the instruments of their freedom. The turbulent element in times of disintegration will only help to increase disorder, whatever be its nature.

28. The helpless in India are immense. Whatever the change of rule, they will resign themselves to it. But their one outstanding characteristic is their responsiveness to Gandhiji's personality. He can galvanise them into action as one, after the Buddha, has been able to do in India. This is not exaggeration. One has only to see, as I have seen, men, women and children travelling miles from their villages to have a *darshan* (sight) of the running train which is supposed to carry him, to be satisfied.

29. The summary of the position, therefore, is this:

(*a*) There are only two sections which are interested in maintaining the political integrity of India at any cost: (1) the British, and (2) the Nationalists.

(*b*) Any attempt to 'window-dress the situation in India by mobilising' the British supporters in favour of the war effort may deceive a few outside countries for the moment, and perhaps its victims. But the attempt

is unreal; it will fail in the end; and the self-deception of those who engineer it will lead to a rude and unpleasant awakening at a critical moment.

(c) The one individual in the world to-day who can rally the moral enthusiasm of the world and of India and the spontaneous sacrifice from Indians, is Gandhiji—a valuable asset, which no statesman in the present crisis of the world can disregard with impunity.

30. There is a persistent attempt made by some to lay emphasis on the formula that Gandhiji and Jinnah must evolve which the British will be willing to accept. This attempt is either genuine or it is not.

31. If it is genuine, is bespeaks serious error of judgement. (a) Gandhiji stands for Nationalism and Democracy; Jinnah has forsworn both; and even if Congress is reduced to the minority of one, Gandhiji will never agree to partition India or to abandon the principles of Democracy. (b) If any real settlement between the Hindus and the Muslims is to come, it will not come by artificial pacts made between political leaders or imposed by the British. The Lucknow Pact was of the first kind; MacDonald's Award was of the latter. Muslims were satisfied with neither.

32. A real adjustment of communal differences will come only under the following circumstances:

I. If the British Government,

(a) formally announces its objective of the British policy to be implemented at the end of the war as free and equal partnership with Britain;

(b) gives up any attempt to insist on a communal settlement as a *sine qua non* of political progress:

(c) declares itself bound only by any adjustment of communal questions arrived at by elected representatives superseding the MacDonald Award;

(d) proceeds to a temporary transformation of the government at the centre into a national war government and the restoration of provincial government.

And when the country feels that so far as the British are concerned, the programme is final.

II. Both sides come to a natural adjustment after a bitter and exhausting struggle has proved the fu-

tility of trying to secure more than one's legitimate place.

33. On the other hand if the formula of communal settlement now harped upon is a mere excuse for delaying political settlement, then having been already so received in the country, it has deceived no one. Then it means that the Government has decided upon the course of waging the war with the help of its supporters only, and rejected what the cautious British mind perhaps thinks the dangerous course of leaving the conduct of the war to the hands of doubtful allies.

34. If this view prevails, the following results may be anticipated:

(*a*) If British Empire is emasculated with India left in the hands of a weak Britain, it will have to face an exasperated National India.
(*b*) If Britain is defeated and India is lost to it, nothing is gained.
(*c*) If Britain is victorious after a protracted struggle, it will lose the benefit of India's active assistance during the war; and will have to face an exasperated India after its exhausting struggle all the same.

In no event, therefore, I venture to submit, would any policy be justified, which postpones the transformation of the Government of India into a National War Government. All petty considerations must yield place to this supreme necessity of the hour.

35. The party which associates itself with British Government at this stage is not likely to weaken its war efforts. No popular Cabinet at the present moment so far as I can see would interfere with Defence so as to make it worse; and that is all that should count at present. In my opinion the war effort made by it would then be so enthusiastic and comprehensive as to change the face of the situation in Asia.

36. A National Government cannot be formed without the Congress. But difficulties will naturally be raised. If the Congress is placated, the Muslim League will be exasperated; there may be internal disorder; and there may be repercussions in the Near East. These difficulties must be carefully examined.

37. (*a*) So far Britain has found in the League an unconscious ally against the Congress demand for political advancement and has therefore given its policy every encouragement.

(*b*) The Viceroy and after him the semi-official Anglo-Indian Press, in search of a communal settlement only through and with Mr. Jinnah, have given to Mr. Jinnah the final veto on all questions relating to constitutional progress of the country; a position which he has not been slow to exploit.

(*c*) In recent discussions and pronouncements the British Government both in England and in India has entirely ignored the Muslims outside the League. This is largely responsible for the eclipse of the Aga Khan, Sir Zafrullah and Sir Sikandar. The Ahraras, the Shias and the Nationalist Muslims simply do not exist for the British Government. The importance thus given to the League is adventitious.

The atmosphere of impending political change gave lurid importance to the League as it puts forward the highest claim; but when the changes are carried through it will naturally disappear.

38. The truth of my analysis can easily be verified if a test calculation is made on the basis that a body of 100 persons is elected by all the members of the provincial assemblies in India (wherein the Muslims already enjoy weightage) by proportional representation on the basis of a single transferable vote. The overwhelming national-minded majority in such a body of representatives which will accept Gandhiji's leadership will consist of a substantial number of the Muslim members elected; and if the British Government honestly exerts itself to set up a genuine National Government, quite a good number of the other Muslims will not support the League. It is unfair, therefore, to allege, and it would be untrue to assume, that the Muslims as a whole desire the partition of the country or that a large number of their leaders do not desire a settlement except on the terms of Mr. Jinnah.

39. If the Hindu-Muslim problem is isolated and is left to a body of elected representatives, no one can have a legiti-

mate grievance. Internal disorder will have to be controlled in any event, for the stakes in question are too large to be endangered for a fear which every Police Commissioner had to face since the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. If such a body is appointed, the Near East will have one grievance more only if they are disposed to be anti-British, but their loyalty will in the end depend upon their self-interest. A strong India, however, will be a greater international force in favour of their adhering to the British rather than against it.

40. Suppose no solution is found and the present *impasse* is allowed to continue, the consequence will be unhappy. The atmosphere of distrust will continue. The Congress will remain in organised inaction waiting for a psychological moment to launch an offensive. The Muslim League will continue to frame schemes of Pakistan and to make higher demands for guarantees. The British supporters will soon get tired of carrying the burden of the war effort in an unsympathetic atmosphere. The gigantic wave of pro-British sympathy which has come over India will subside. If the war effort unsupported by the spontaneous goodwill of the people as a whole continues to consume the resources of the country for some time, a dull resentment and then a deeper dissatisfaction will follow, paving the way for an outburst. And if a real crisis occurred on the Indian border, India will come to look upon it as a welcome disaster for the British rule.

41. I will not ignore the British die-hard attitude to such a proposal. India, according to it, will cease to be governed in purely British interests, as it has been so far; a National Government may develop anti-British tendencies; and the extremists may drag it outside the orbit of Allied influence. These fears are not quite groundless. But today the leaders in control of the nationalist movement in India are pro-British. For the moment they must rely not only on British military experts but on the steelframe of a British army and navy to defend their newly acquired status. If they undertake to fight the war at this stage under British leadership India will have soon acquired organic solidarity, with Britain. Their effort in the allied cause—and I am afraid at this late stage it will have to

be more than human—would have diverted the sympathies away from hostile directions. But above all it must not be forgotten that the word 'British interests' has outgrown its pre-war meaning of British commercial and economic self-interest and the security of British services. Today it lies in maintaining and establishing self-sufficient centres of power in all parts of the world, which would, of themselves—that is, without the coercive might of the British army and navy—remain the allies of British for the purposes not only of war, but also of reconstruction which must follow its termination. No discontented dependency smarting at being deprived of an opportunity to gain its freedom I fear, will now serve British interests either during or after the war.

42. In the end I may once again urge that setting up a strong National Government at the centre is today neither a matter of convenience nor a fairplay as it has before 10th May, 1940. It has to be of extreme importance both for Britain and India; of life and death urgency to the maintenance of the British influence in Asia and to the stabilisation of the East. It is a matter, achieved, if necessary, against the unimaginative traditions of ponderous statesmanship with which India has been familiar in the past.

43. If this is delayed, my fear is that one more lost opportunity will be added to the many which are now being charged heavily to the account of Britain.

K. M. MUNSHI.

VI

[This is one of the most eventful letters of Munshiji—a letter which is personal as well as public. Non-violence in thought, word and deed is Gandhiji's invaluable gift to our nation. The truth of his ideology is accepted more or less by all in theory. But there have not been wanting persons, eminent in their own way, who are doubtful about the practicability of Gandhiji's principle of AHIMSA*—at certain times and in certain situations. In* 1941 *when India's safety was threatened by internal disorders and external attacks, Munshiji was assailed by such a doubt. And he did not make a secret of it. For, as a disciple of Gandhiji he knew that to speak out the truth as he found*

it was absolutely necessary—if he was not to be dishonest to himself. It was in that spirit and mood that Munshiji made bold to place his doubt before his master and to disagree with him. And Gandhiji was not slow to recognise Munshiji's sincerity in the matter. He characterised the letter as a "transparent letter", and later observed in a press statement—"I congratulate him upon taking the step." It was not an easy thing for Munshiji to differ from Gandhiji on this important point and to resign from the Congress. But being one who has been moulded by the GITA *ideal of following one's own* DHARMA, *Munshiji could not do otherwise. The letter reveals Munshiji's sterling sense of personal integrity and his fearless pursuit of truth as he conceives it.—Ed.*]

Nainital, May 26, 1941.

My Dear Bapu,

Please excuse the language, but as my thoughts have, in this instance, taken shape in English they had best be expressed through that medium. I am seriously perturbed since yesterday morning when I read your letter to Shri Bhogilal Lala in the morning papers. I will quote two material paras:

(1) Those (Congressmen) who favour violent resistance (by way of self-defence) must get out of the Congress and shape their conduct just as they think fit and guide the others accordingly.

(2) A Congressman may not directly or indirectly associate himself with gymnasia where training in violent resistance is given.

Forgive me if I cannot reconcile myself to these injunctions. Since Pakistan has been in action at Dacca, Ahmedabad, Bombay and other places, it is clear that such riots are going to be a normal feature of our life for some years. If war comes to India's frontiers or the British machinery of maintaining order weakens, they will perhaps grow more frequent and intense if a division of India is sought to be enforced by internal or external agencies through organised violence. If life, home and shrine and honour of women is threatened by *goondaism,* organised resistance in self-defence appears to me to be a paramount and inalienable duty, whatever form such resistance may take. Do you include "akhadas" in the gymna-

sia where training in violent resistance is given? I may inform you that for the last fifteen years and more I have been associated with the "akhada" movement in the presidency both directly and indirectly. I presided over two conferences, one at Bombay and the other at Poona, to organise it on a systematic line. I have still unofficial connection with several "akhadas". I deem them an essential machinery for training our race in the art of self-defence. During the last many years they have played a great part in giving to us some self-confidence to resist *goondaism*. In spite of the great efforts which I have made since yesterday, I have failed to convince myself that my views as expressed in an article I wrote a fortnight ago and published in the *Social Welfare* of the 22nd May, 1941, require a revision. I am sending you a copy of the article for ready reference.

Since I came to you in 1930, you have been more to me than a political leader. You have been to the whole of our family a father. You have been a beacon for the last ten years lighting me on the path of the little spirituality that I can lay claim to. Hence the pain I feel in confessing that I have searched in vain for a way out of this conflict, I can, of course, keep quiet or can acquiesce in what you or can, for fear of losing my Congress association and your confidence, both precious possessions of my life, voice your sentiments and go my way or do nothing. But something in me rebels against such a course. You have been to me the embodiment of truth and I would lose my self-respect, my right to pray to God if I pretend to follow you with such mental reservations. I cannot pledge myself not to preach, help, organise or sympathise with organised resisttance to violence in self-defence by all possible means. I do not want to be dishonest to myself nor to the country whose integrity is now threatened nor do I desire to deny myself your inspiration and guidance in this dilemma. Please let me know what I should do.

My wife is leaving Nainital on the 28th and has already written to you. I am leaving again for Kosani. I will start from here on June 9 and will be in Bombay on the 11th. Will the 12th or the 13th suit you to see me at Sevagram? My eyes

are still troubling me. Except for them I am quite fit. My wife joins me in sending you our profound respect.

Yours,
K. M. MUNSHI.

VII

[This letter is something like a corollary to the previous one. After about five years of exile from the Congress, Munshiji felt the urge to join its fold once again. And so, with the candour so characteristic of him, Munshiji sought Gandhiji's advice and followed it.—Ed.]

Bombay, 19th February, 1946.

Revered Bapu,

In October last, friends from the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee had recommended me as a candidate for the Central Assembly and Sardar Vallabhbhai had accepted the recommendation subject to your approval. At the time you were good enough to advise me not to stand as it was not in my interest. Now many friends have pointed out to me that at this critical time it is my duty at least to resume my membership of the Congress as a four-anna member.

I left the Congress in 1941 under your advice. My views rendered it necessary. To quote your words, I could not be disloyal to the Congress which I had so long served. Since then I have tried to serve the Congress and the country from outside to the best of my ability. And nothing has been more gratifying than that during these years I have had the good fortune to retain both your confidence and interest in me.

The coming months will see a trial of strength for the Nation. And I have no differences left with the present policy of the Congress.

I have, therefore, thought over the conversation we had last night and I have decided to accept your advice to resume my membership of the Congress.

Yours,
K. M. MUNSHI.

VIII

[*Here is a letter, entirely different in spirit from the previous ones. This is what one may call a personal letter—personal in the significant sense of the word. But, though personal, it has wider ramifications. It is the loud-thinking of a soul, and it acquires more than the usual significance in that it has another great soul as its audience. In short, the letter is the communion of one* SADHAKA *with another. Incidentally, the letter clears once for all the nauseating scandal-mongering assiduously indulged in by jaundiced eyes and jealous tongues.—Ed.*]

26, Ridge Road,
Bombay, 24th September, 1946.

My Dear Dilip Kumar,

Your letter. It was so exhilarating, for after many years it is given to me to have a correspondent with whom I can have some discussion on absolute values. You know, when you attempt to make of yourself all the time a Karmayogi, however small, you sometimes lose yourself in a waterless desert. "*Kathayanta Mam Parasparam*" no longer sheds its life-giving sweetness. And, thank God, in the train going to Delhi I have the time and the solitude to reply to your letter.

Yes, I like the *Bhagvata* immensely—though I read it far back in 1922. It is as much a scripture as poetry—immensely great. Sense and sound and experience, blended in harmony, move forward in almost every line—never so much as in the X Canto—to create the finest creation of literary art. Moderns have avoided it because it is worshipped as a scripture; it's a pity, for parts of it can compare favourably with *Shakuntala* or Goethe's *Iphigenia* at their best.

The same thing has happened to Shri Krishna. Because he is worshipped as a deity, the modern westernistic mind hates even to look at the picture of perhaps the most triumphantly human of individuals which the imagination of twenty centuries have left to man. When I read the *Mahabharat*, *Bhagvat*, *Harivamsha* and the *Gita*, one after the other—not as a devotee or a mystic but as a student of human nature—the "Man" as He rose before me was perfect and yet so real, I cried "God made man—but man has made Shri Krishna—what God would

be if He were a man." *Shrikrishnastu Bhagvan swayam* is not a mere exclamation of a devotee; it is of a creative artist who, surpassing Michael Angelo when he sculptured Moses, could say, "You are God Himself. Speak. The World will listen to you till the end of time." The child, the youth, the lover, the wrestler, the friend, the husband, the statesman, the conqueror, the seer and the last of all, triumphant time *Kalosmi lokakshaya kritpravritta.* What aspect of human nature has not seen its highest and the most beautiful expression than in Him. I wish some great writer would complete the work of Bankim and give Him back to the moderns as the Man, than whom the conception of perfection can go no higher.

I will now come to your minor point about Shri Rama. *Ramayana,* as I understand it, is an epic of conflicts between urges in man; and in Shri Rama, Valmiki has painted the man who by innate perception prefers the ideal to the human one. In other great men—however great—there is a struggle to prefer one to the other; in Shri Rama the ideal is preferred to the other effortlessly, as the only course.

When asked to go to the forest, he never thinks of the choice; of the possibility of one course being better than the other; of the why and wherefore and the what next of the banishment. The conflict of *raga, bhaya* and *krodha,* simply does not exist for him. With sublime simplicity he remonstrates with Kaikeyi; "Why did she not convey her wishes directly to him?"

This trait is seen at its highest in Sita's abandonment. He loves Sita; to him, she is as pure as purity itself; but the issue is whether he should be true to the ideal of kingship. I never could understand this till I had an experience of my own. The man who would discharge a public duty cannot be content with only being true; at all moments of time, he must act so as to be *recognised* as true.

My wife always criticises Gandhiji for forcing Kasturba once to give up a few rupees which she good-naturedly had kept with herself. If I mistake not, he even openly criticised the act in *Young India.* But you know the public—our modern Moloch. I can understand that great gesture; otherwise these

3 or 5 rupees would have destroyed the whole fabric of confidence which had reared in the Indian mind, so anxious to believe in other people's lapses.

I will tell you one of the funniest experiences of mine in this respect.

In 1934, a Gujarati girl wanted a divorce from her husband, and her father and her solicitor accompanied me in the train with a shorthand typist, so that I may dictate a petition for divorce. I was then going to Nagpur for the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. I finished the petition and the party left me at Kalyan.

I returned from Nagpur and went with my family to Ooty. Within a fortnight I received several letters from my friends in Bombay that the town was ringing with the report that I had filed a petition to divorce my wife, as I wanted to marry a cinema actress and that I was at Ooty with her!

The story was forgotten for a while, but when, in 1937, I stood for the Assembly, the rival candidates trotted it out again. One rival even went to the length of solemnly urging it before a member of the High Command of the Congress. Luckily, the member was like my elder brother and knew me and my family so well.

But in 1939 Dr. Gilder and myself were closely associated in introducing Prohibition in Bombay. There was an anti-prohibition group which wanted to degrade us in the public eye. They fished out the story and paid money to have it circulated all over the province with all circumstantial details. One reporter, who confessed to having sent a telegram to a Punjab paper, told the police that he was heavily paid to send out the report that the actress had an illegitimate son by me; that she filed a suit for maintenance; that I mortgaged my house with a bank and paid one lakh and odd thousand rupees to a named solicitor. The rumour was so assiduously circulated that even lawyers, who could have immediately verified by a reference to Court records, believed it. All my friends literally writhed with agony at this report, hopelessly untrue in every respect. The named Judge was not in Bombay; the actress

had no son; and my house was unincumbered and the solicitors never knew of any such thing.

I laughed at it; my wife laughed at it; so did my children; our life has been built on such unreserved camaraderie, such mutual devotion, that the thing was too ridiculous for words. But the story was spicy; it went from mouth to mouth; it made the air stifling.

I left the ministry. Years have gone by; still, the rumour persists. Some claim to have seen me walking with the actress every day in my compound at 10 p.m. They cannot for the life of them imagine why a man should walk in his wife's company in front of his house at 10 p.m. every day!

I then realized the predicament of Shri Rama. In this case our domestic life is transparent; our romantic attachment has been a matter of public knowledge. My so-called relation with the actress was restricted to two facts: First, she was years ago the star of a company which filmed two of my stories and she acted the heroine in them; secondly, when these two films were first screened, my wife and I invited the producer and the leading characters to a dinner as I always did then (I am wiser now) when my stories were filmed.

Now if the attitude of the age on the morale of its public men had been stricter, if there had been some fact which gave a plausible foundation to the rumour, and if I had pretentions to be an ideal public man; and if my little world had not known the relations between my wife and myself, I would have had to give up office.

Shri Rama was in a terrible plight. His life work was in jeopardy; he preferred personal suffering and the suffering of his wife to public duty. It was the only way to satisfy Moloch. One can only be *tulya ninda stuti,* when one is a Yogi—"satisfied with whatever that comes"; not when one wants to hold public confidence in trust.

Now to the major point. You have referred to three men. Dayananda, whom I have revered from infancy, Shri Aravinda, whose memory and works shaped my early life to some extent: and Gandhiji whose life has been lighting up many dark corners on my journey to self-realization.

I will postulate the canons of my criterion in such cases.

The highest integration of a man's personality is only possible by the elimination of attachment, fear and anger. Human imagination has tried to create such men, e.g., Shri Krishna. In life, this "self-realisation" has to be captured by effort; call it Yoga, if you like. *Parama Shanti,* the positive "wide calm" is not acquired without it.

But some men can, with comparative ease, set out on the journey. To Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was given almost to reach the journey's end but with little effort. *Raga, bhaya, krodha,* had little innate tenacity in him; and with an easy effort—compared to others—he attained integration.

Dayananda could drop his *raga* easily; he was born void of fear; he was of an irascible temperament; but his *yoga* could divert it into an impersonal channel.

From the absolute point of view his integration was less complete than that of Ramakrishna. *Parama Shanti,* the absolute peace, remained unattained. Shri Aravinda's temperament, I may venture, was more like that of Shri Ramakrishna; before he started on the journey his *raga* and *dvesha* were attenuated. perhaps he was so born. He is the only one of the four Masters under review who started with a vast intellectuality, and a poetic fibre vibrant with an aesthetic sense to which a mastery of the classics had given a rare universality.

Unlike Dayananda, he was not born devoid of fear; perhaps its stock was not so easily liquidatable as in Ramakrishna's case. I am not quite sure whether his flight to Pondicherry was not inspired by its latent roots.

But he had, so far as one can find from his writings,—for as you know I have no personal contact—achieved as near an integration as one can in seclusion. His later writings disclose that his attitude is purged of all the three major afflictions—*kleshas;* he is nearer Ramakrishna than any of the other three. His vision is less wide; his *Parama Shanti* appears even greater. I use the word "appear" only because he lives under peculiar conditions, whose justification I have not the necessary qualification to appraise.

All these three, therefore, attained a high degree of integration. Comparison on that high level is bound to be faulty.

Gandhiji is quite different. He had innate *raga*, *bhaya* and *krodha* of tremendous power and tenacity; he has their roots still. They cause turmoils of the soul. To him the path of conquest had been a ceaseless struggle with giants. He has not killed them; he has acquired the power to master them; but the giants are still not tame domestics; he has to master them on stray occasions, still.

His struggle has not been an easy win like those of the other three Masters. It has been a life and death struggle every moment of life. His effort is a mighty epic as compared with the easy lines of beauty which Ramakrishna and Aravinda could write. And to that extent, Gandhiji has been able to claim greater kinship with ordinary men.

According to the test of absolute integration, he would be far behind; among the class of *Videhas*, to use Patanjali's phrase. If the test is of effort spent or the intensity of the struggle, he stands above them all. And in achievement as Shri Aravinda is the living successor of Shri Ramakrishna, Gandhiji is that of Dayananda.

The former proved the validity of the eternal truth of integration; the latter has established that affairs of men can be organised by corporate efforts on the lines of that integration.

If Shri Aravinda has given a reintegration of *Sanatana Dharma*, Gandhiji, has given to India—its home—a position and to the world a weapon of non-violence without which *Dharma* itself would stand but as a philosophic doctrine or an esoteric practice.

If I have ventured on a bold quest of values, pray, forgive me; but I must write what I feel, and with my limited vision, can see.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
K. M. MUNSHI.

Munshis In Life And Literature

"Gujarat, like the rest of India, is brooding. The language
—GANDHIJI

I have known Kanaiyalal Munshi for over a quarter of a century. I cannot now recall how I came to know him. Perhaps there is something in the oldworld theory about people coming into each other's lives as a result of past associations. However that may be, I, who left Gujarat before I was seventeen and spent almost thirty years of my life away from Gujarat, have been in intimate contact with a singularly attractive, genial and dynamic personality—always brimming with laughter and bursting with energy and making plans and schemes—often grandiose—which come to him almost as a matter of second nature. Munshi was born in 1887 in what is now a rather sleepy hollow—Broach, the headquarters of a somewhat unattractive district, a decaying town reminiscent of a prosperous port which no longer exists. Munshi, despite his claims to be modern, cannot shake off the memories of his Brahmin ancestry, or the pride of his ancestors, whose principal claim to distinction appears to have been their misplaced arrogance and infinite capacity for family feuds. As a matter of fact, but for Munshi, it would not be necessary to mention them at all. It is curious how the traditions of an ancient society and in many respects of an anachronistic past continue to dominate the life of a good many of us despite revolutionary changes sweeping over the entire world, including the relatively stagnant society such as ours. It is perhaps the inevitable penalty of having a past!

The idea of a motherland has something elemental about it; for it continues to haunt the sub-conscious corridors of a literary and artistic mind. The country and its language and

their countless associations weave spells of dreams and visions and impel men to sacrifice their everything in the service of the motherland. With India's dimensions and vast distances—despite its cultural integrity, provincial characteristics—their strength and weaknesses have been noted and commented upon from the earliest times. The Gujarati provincialism appears to have been relatively an ancient phenomenon and the march of centuries seems to have developed the pride not only in the past, but a confidence in the near future. Despite the enormous self-confidence and commendable enterprise of the modern Gujarati in the domain of non-violent politics and acquisitive economy, his output in the realm of imaginative art and creative literature has been neither brilliant nor profound; though it is true that the last 25 years have witnessed a cultural revival, which few, knowing the limitations and rather specialized pursuits and the strictly practical viewpoint of the Gujaratis, would have ventured to predict.

Kanaiyalal Munshi is perhaps the first of the modern authors of Gujarat—modern in the sense that culturally he was a child profoundly influenced by the teachings of the west, who was not afraid to incorporate in his life the influences—literary and otherwise—from the outside world that he thought significant. He was not ashamed to acknowledge his indebtedness to the West, nor did he suffer from any inferiority complex about his own culture or the great traditions of his country. Born in an orthodox family, brought up in the backwaters of a sleepy town of Gujarat, he had the advantage of growing up amidst an old world-order of superstitions, traditions, and vanities with an attitude of sanctimonious complecency towards the past. It was a world of dreams, albeit limited, in respect of actual social environment; but with the advantage of being rooted in a congenial soil. There were not many thrills in the social life of orthodox India 50 years ago. It was a pattern which had been set and looking shabby with the influx of time. It kept, however, the social fabric together and fostered a spirit of contentment and steady behaviour. Petty jealousies, meaningless intrigues, slanderous gossip about the doings of one another in small social groups—were the only diversions

possible in that atmosphere—particularly for women and the aged of either sex. This suffocating inertia was tolerable only with the recurrence of periodical festivals and the religious colouring of the life of the people. There was always the consolation of the other world though there was but little scope for any enterprise, or possible change in the present. The stream of life had reached a level when it was not capable of dancing and leaping from stone to stone, from crag to crag, tumbling down in a lustry torrent into the valleys below and coursing to its ultimate destiny.

It was in such an atmosphere that young Munshi dreamt his dreams—of his Bhargava ancestry of the legendary Parashurama, who had exterminated all the Kshatriyas in the universe. He had his visions of love—of a partner in life, who would share all his urge for beauty, who, besides being a comrade in all his literary pursuits, would appreciate his flights of imagination, support them, and even inspire the radiant vision which he wanted to see and feel. Outwardly life was no different for him than for any others of middle-class families in Gujarat, or almost anywhere in semi-urban India. He had, however, one supreme advantage, which not many are fortunate to have, and that was of having a mother of exceptional understanding, amazing sympathy and insight into the workings of a growing adolescent mind. At every stage in Munshi's life his mother stood behind as the one pillar on which he could always lean for strength and support.

Women of this kind have been responsible for moulding the lives of many a great man in this country, for even amidst the very circumscribed limits of their vision, and the very narrow range of their life, they by instinct felt the impact of new forces which would affect the life and thought of their children. They themselves were orthodox, but they had the necessary resilence and flexibility of character to be completely heterodox and singularly practical in their outlook so far as the lives of their children were concerned.

Munshi has expressed his indebtedness to his mother eloquently and frequently, and I must not omit to give a brief picture of this remarkable woman.

Munshi's father was a Deputy Collector—an important official—50 years ago. But he died young, somewhere near 1908, and did not leave much for his dependants. It was left to Munshi's mother to maintain the standards of family prestige and to defray the expenses of educating a delicate child and his sisters. She was, however, a woman of the old type combining austerity and toughness with a singular understanding for the changing requirements of the new generation. She died at the ripe age of 82 in 1936, having had the good fortune of seeing her delicate son ripening into very distinguished and affluent manhood. Despite her orthodox birth, she was the first and foremost to realise the deep-seated aspirations of her only son and agreed to his second marriage outside the social conventions with what was then an unusual degree of moral courage. But Indian women have been remrakable for their responsiveness to circumstances without allowing their moral fibre to be weakened in any manner whatsoever.

Munshi was a voracious reader. He had been nurtured on the myths and legends of the *puranas*. Those were the days when itinerant pandits educated the masses for a pittance by reciting day after day for weeks on end, the tales from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* keeping crowds of people of all ages fascinated and awake till the early hours of the morning. They projected the vision of the India that was, pointed out the moral, and gave guidance to those who had within them the power to emulate the great heroes of the past. Munshi naturally conceived himself as a hero, patterned on the ancient models, who would in due course conquer the universe by sheer grit and enterprise.

When he came to read English, Munshi was naturally thrilled with the tales of Dumas, Victor Hugo, Marie Corelli and other Western writers of fiction. There was one thing about this foreign fiction which fascinated Munshi's generation and that was the capacity to tell a story. There were Indian stories, but in most cases they were long-winded and overloaded with rhetoric and moral injunctions. The old world legends and myths had begun to pall, they had become stale and had but little relation with the realities and problems of modern life.



Munshiji at nine (Sachin 1897) His mother to the right, father to the left

Above all, they did not make much allowance for the natural urge for enterprise and romance. Life was cast in rigid moulds of conventional morality for love-making. Munshi's future career as a writer of fiction was, therefore, dominated by the brilliance of the European fiction and it would be false to underestimate the debt that he owes to the Western masters for his considerable success in telling a tale directly, vividly and tersely. He never indulges in mere padding or ornate verbosity—a besetting sin of most Indian romances. He pursues the narrative to its logical conclusion in a style at once forceful, simple and vibrant. The types of characters that he chose as the *dramatis personae* of his novels were only in part inspired by Western prototypes, firstly because Munshi himself was a thorough-bred Brahmin of the orthodox variety and secondly because he was comparatively ignorant of the Western modes of living to model his characters with anything but Indian clay. The characters that he chose and dramatised were really the creatures of the imagination of a man whose whole life was moulded by converging currents of different civilisations, but whose roots were strongly planted in the soil of his country's traditions.

Munshi has been anything but reticent about himself. He wrote in 1930, in the Nasik gaol,—a remarkable book, within about ten days. This one—*Shishu ane Sakhi* (Child and Comrade)—is written in an unusual style, but perhaps for that very reason, it is suited to that intimate and biographical recital of a mind richly endowed, sensitive in the extreme, given to moods of elation and depression. Munshi traces in brief the development of his own mind and his romantic marriage,—poetically worded paragraphs which are perhaps unique in the entire Gujarati literature, in the sense that they portray the lights and shadows of his intimate life candidly and with little reserve. There are some passages which are cruel, where Munshi, for instance, describes his emotions at being married to a tiny uneducated girl of twelve. This little bride was completely uneducated and naturally insensible to the tones and colours of a sophisticated life. Her parents had neglected to impart any kind of elegance to this little child, whose entire

universe centred round her husband and his welfare; whose intellectual range embraced but the gossip of the household and whose interests were limited to the affairs of a humdrum middle-class family. The shock of this orthodox marriage to a youth of Munshi's sensibility was profound. He contemplated even suicide as a possible means of escape. For such chasm between the mate of his dreams and the actual partner given to him by social convention could not be bridged. This disparity was and is nothing unusual in Indian life; but Kanaiyalal Munshi was not Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi; Munshi was a romantic keenly sensible to sensuous appeals, one who loved to roam in regions of fancy and delight in attempting to seize the beauties of his imagination in actual ad concrete world. Time is a great healer, and the young girl-bride came to be an integral part of Munshi's household. True, she never became an idol of his heart. But the idols are not always stable, nor perhaps significant from a strictly biological standpoint. In any case, the child developed into a happy and dignified woman, who shared in the earlier struggles of her husband and tasted the joys of his rapid rise from comparative poverty to the comfortable life of a prosperous lawyer, distinguished writer and eloquent speaker. Then she had also become a mother, and as Munshi expresses in an eloquent passage, a little fairy had been born, who constituted a golden link between these two such disparate entities. Munshi also had grown. His romanticism had been tempered by the lapse of time, and also by the fact that the desires, the dreams and ambitions had been partially sublimated and expressed through the medium of literature. Literature is a great anodyne!

A woman of remarkable personality, unhappy in her first marriage, suddenly appears on the stage of Munshi's life—first as a literary co-worker, and later as a dear friend and his life's chosen mate and wife. But this is a part of Munshi's life, which he himself has recounted frankly and eloquently, and I have no desire to go into the emotional strain and struggle through which Munshi passed and expressed himself in burning words; nor do I propose to deal at length with the distinguished career which Kanaiyalal and Lilavati Munshi together

built up, not only in literature, but in the public life of the country. It would, however, be appropriate to say here a few words regarding the women of Gujarat. The Gujarati woman has enjoyed a greater degree of freedom than women in other parts of India. Having her being amidst a highly practical people, whose values are in terms of material goods, the woman of Gujarat has developed certain distinctive characteristics. Simple, matter-of-fact, sentimental and sensuous, despite the conventional veil of indifference to the pleasures of the senses, she has played and continues to play an enormously important part in the life of Gujarat—whether in the home or in the field of social service or of politics. She is the pivot round which the world of Gujarat really moves; her contentment, her pleasures and sorrows are immensely important for the social harmony of the home. Nowhere in India has the woman played such a role quietly and with such confidence as the woman in Gujarat. Despite her handicaps, common to all women in India, she has taken her place alongside of her menfolk as a matter of right and enriched the social and public life of Gujarat and, in a sense, of India as a whole in an exceptional measure. It is curious that these provincial characteristics should have been noted, and commented upon by ancient writers; and judging from present experience their judgment was on the whole sound. The Gujarati woman has not the exquisite simplicity and accomplishments of the woman in the South, particularly from Malabar; she has not the blinding smartness of bearing of the beautifully shaped daughters of the Punjab or of Kashmir, nor has she the calm austerity of the demure damsels from Maharashtra or the dreamy grace of the Bengali women. Like the daughters of Rajputana, the woman in Gujarat is simple but gay; sentimental rather than subtle or poetic; deeply sensitive to colours and the rhythm of movement; eminently practical with enormous powers to suffer adverse tides of fortune. The Gujarati women have a habit of keeping their form and feminity till late in life. They have a genius for quiet withdrawal from the worldly stage with the advent of old age and being content to exercise their influence from behind the scenes.

which is therefore all the more powerful and felt than if it were open and explicit!

It is not an accident that Kasturba Gandhi has been acclaimed as representing the highest ideal of Indian womanhood. This apotheosis of Kasturba is not wholly on account of her association with the great Mahatma; for I know that she, like countless mothers in Gujarat, was a great and representative type that has brightened the homes of Gujarat and spiritualized them for centuries. The Gujarati man has invariably been sentimental; he has sighed and longed for a mate of his dreams, for the traditions of good and beautiful Gujarati women continue to fire his imagination and inspire him to great enterprises for winning the worldly goods so necessary for the happiness of a practical people.

Munshi, who shed tears and contemplated even suicide, has been like the hero in a melodrama, singularly fortunate in having won his heart's desire, and found in his second venture a woman of his dreams to share his home and his happiness. Egoist as he is, Munshi is naturally in a mood of elation, and acknowledges his debt to his wife in generous terms. But what he has failed to do is to admit the fact that Lilavati Munshi —a distinguished stylist and a writer of powerful prose with an unusual eye for character sketches and a pen dipped in biting sarcasm had to immolate herself in respect of her literary career, after she became installed as the presiding deity of the Munshi household. Two streams of literary activity, which had been significant and separate, became merged together and the only entity left, atleast in matters literary, was Kanaiyalal Munshi himself.

Lilavati Munshi, despite Munshi's wrapping her up in a mantle of high romantic beauty, is a singularly efficient little lady with feet firmly planted on the earth, vibrant, matter-of-fact, efficient and an accomplished housewife. She is, like her husband, ambitious, and has considerable organizing capacity. But despite Munshi's romancing and his romantic temperament, it would be a mistake to class either of the Munshis as ethereal beings moving at altitudes of rarefied atmosphere. Munshi was born a Brahmin with plenty of pride but little of



The Munshis
(1946)

possessions; while Lilavati was brought up in the lap of comfort and in an environment which set store on wealth rather than on learning or ideals. Both began their life amidst uncongenial surroundings, and it was good that these two were brought together through the medium of literature. Their partnership has been exceptionally happy, particularly from the point of view of Gujarati art and literature and public life in Bombay. Lilavati Munshi's literary pursuits suffered a complete eclipse after marriage; her energy was diverted to the more practical aspect of civic life, and with her energy, tact and commonsense, she moved in every phase of the busy life of Bombay with ease and confidence. The poetic element which had in her earlier years expressed itself as an urge for travelling, largely as an escape from a miserable and conventional existence, became sublimated into something more significant and made her concentrate on developing the beautiful crafts of Gujarat and reviving that innate sense of rhythm and dance, which have been the proud possessions of the Gujarati women since times immemorial. Lilavati Munshi, despite her moving on the civic stage of the municipal politics and the provincial legislature, became the fostering-spirit and guardian-angel for Munshi's varied pursuits as an indefatigable writer and a brilliant lawyer, a restless and ambitious politician and organiser.

Lilavati Munshi has practically ceased writting for the last few years since her preoccupation with municipal and political affairs. It is a pity, for she is an accomplished writer with a style of her own, and a distinct gift for focussing attention on social problems, and a psychological insight into the problems of Indian life, which few Gujarati writers of the present generation possess. In her volume of short stories—*Jivanmanthi Jadeli*—(Stories from Life)—collected in 1932, she has handled a variety of themes with considerable verve and given us a mordant interpretation of the social inequities, particularly, of the sad lot of woman in Indian society. Her main theme is the freedom of woman—freedom of every kind from the existing tyranny, so accentuated and so completely accepted almost as a law of nature, simply because of the economic serfdom of the Indian woman.

Traditions have had a great deal to do with the woman's own attitude towards her various disabilities, and these latter never fail to attract the acute observation and the acid comments of one who has herself gone through the whole gamut of a woman's handicaps in Indian life. She occasionally relents and produces a little masterpiece, where her woman's heart throbs with the elemental love for the child and for the husband. The story of the lonely Sadhuram handles with considerable insight and tenderness the theme of a lonely man battling against the upsurging emotions aroused and defeated simply by the inexorable tide and ebb of love. Lilavati Munshi forgets her grievances against mere man, and finds that life, despite all its tragic conflicts, is based on a relatively simple pattern of emotions. She never ceases to be a realist, for she, the shrewd woman that she is, understands the implications of actions, which sometimes have unforeseen results. Nowhere has she brought these out vividly as in the short play that she has written in dealing with the Gandhian movement. Gandhism has had enormous influence outside the political sphere: it has affected and partially moulded, though not quite so radically in the long run as one would have expected, the shape of Hindu life and ideology. Both Lilavati Munshi and her husband have been greatly affected by the personal influence of Gandhiji himself and his philosophy.

Lilavati Munshi has written other plays also. Here again, in *Kumaradevi* she portrays the famous Gupta empress as a woman of outstanding character—a woman who was in fact the dominant partner in the life of Chndra Gupta II. The play is remarkable not so much for its dramatic quality as for an ambitious attempt to portray the story of great character—powerful, dynamic, ruthless, and yet feminine—from the galaxy of India's historic personalities. Lilavati Munshi must have sometimes seen the visions of Kumaradevi, who never forgot to describe herself not only as the queen of Chandra Gupta, but also as the daughter of the proud and famous Lichchhavi clan. Lilavati Munshi writes well; she weilds a homely style, direct, sometimes whimsical, always observant and usually devoid of rhetoric. She is primarily interested in dissecting

human motives and observing men and women at a deeper level than what they appear to the outside public. In this respect she is quite different from her husband, Kanaiyalal Munshi, whose method of writing is different.

Munshi has written considerable amount of fiction—historical and social; but Munshi is neither an archaeologist nor a scholar nor a professional historian. He is primarily an imaginative writer, who views India's past with the glowing eyes of a poet. He is also a keen politician and journalist and is therefore unable to shake off the influence of current events from his writings. There is, therefore, a certain element of anachronism in the maner in which his various characters behave. It is perhaps impossible for a writer to forget his environment and to project himself so completely into the past, as to ignore his personal predilections and his general ideology. Munshi has never been tired of talking of India's integrity; and, in essence, the stand that he has taken is not only historically correct but also vital from the viewpoint of the interests of the world as a whole. While it is not necessary to discuss the question in a discourse of this nature, it is essential to emphasise Munshi's attachment to the uniqueness of his country's civilization with its unchallenged and dynamic continuity. He has often taken his characters from the remote past of the Vedas and he is particularly proud of what he considers to be his important contribution in interpreting the golden age of India; but if prediction has any relevance in a matter of this kind, I should imagine that these books dealing with some of the forgotten characters of the Vedic civilisation will remain more as a testimony to his orthodox background from which Munshi derived his literary inspirations than to their general and intrinsic appeal. The reason is not a lack of literary merit. The root cause is somewhat deeper. India is passing through one of the great epochal changes of history when the tempo of social and political changes is so rapid that it is almost impossible to see even an outline of the shape of things to come. All that one can say is that the gods of the Vedas and even of the more recent mythology have virtually ceased to be. Even India, with her long and continuous tradition, is more inclined

to look forward rather than backwards and the rising generation is more interested in solving the more mundane and concrete problems of life than in recalling the memories of a past, however brilliant its hues may have been, simply because that past does not matter or has but little significance in moulding the life of the future.

Munshi has devoted several years of his life in writing the drama of India's past, the latest being an ambitious volume entitled *Parashuram.* Munshi has felt that Aryan culture has in it something living and that it would continue to live in the untold generations of Indians hereafter. He has, therefore, taken enormous pains to bring to life characters mythical or legendary which would throw into relief the achievements of a bygone age. The result has not been altogether commensurate with the expenditure of labour and energy spent on it. It is astonishing that Munshi has found so much time and energy to devote to literature even when he has occupied a pre-eminent position as a busy lawyer, an active journalist and a shrewd politician. But this very dispersion of energy has doubtless affected the finish of his work and concentration and also the development of a mature, precise and inspiring manner of writing. Munshi is rarely interested in laying bare the deeper currents of human psychology. His canvas and range are somewhat limited, and the limitations are perhaps both the result of his mental make-up as well as that of modern India. Munshi may be considered as a representative medium of the many cross-currents of India's intellectual make-up—a mixture of the ancient and the modern, a mixture of the scientific and the superstitious and a curious amalgam of idealism and a spirit of compromise.

Despite Munshi's pre-occupation for the last many years with India's distant past, he has been extraordinarily sensible to the charms of medieval Gujarat, which threw up a galaxy of individuals immortalised in the pages of his many romances.

Personages who were hitherto thought of as minor characters have been moulded into heroic proportions and transformed into characters, gay, elegant, strong and altogether free and modern in their outlook. Some of these characters portray

Munshi's own moods, for Munshi himself is a person, who lives in a world of his own. He has never forgotten to occupy the central place in the drama of his mental life. The result is a series of striking individualities—men and women, who charm us with their idealism, with their conflict of emotions, and with their passionate love for life. One has only to mention figures such as Munjal and Minal Devi, Kak and Manjari. The history of Gujarat was for the first time made into something living, dealing with men and women who would have done credit to any country and who, above all, furnished patterns of dreams and behaviour to the younger generation of today. Munshi is not very much troubled by the minutiae of historical accuracy; he is chiefly interested in depicting the types of human life, which he has seen, whether in actual life or only in his dreams. He is a curious mixture of the idealist and a practical man of affairs; one who swears by the Mahatma, and yet is ambitious and active, and engaged in so many activities where life has to be lived not always in an atmosphere of rigid idealism or uncompromising attitude to human foibles. Munshi himself has passed through a variety of experiences, he has practised *hatha-yoga;* he has experienced visions, he has more than toyed with the calling of spirits and reading of the past and the future by sooth-sayers of all kinds. He has, in short, tasted life at various springs and what he has never lacked is a smile—an infinite capacity for converting the vicissitudes of life into their rosier and brighter aspect. His characters such as Manjari and Kak and Minal Devi and Munjal—all these reflect Munshi's own outlook on life. They are characters who are never depressed or overwhelmed by circumstances; their natural reaction is to ride the storms of life in all circumstances, political or emotional or of any other kind. Munshi is never daunted by mere convention or canons of formal respectability. He has felt throughout his career that one of the greatest handicaps of Indian society has been its lip-service to principles in the abstract and its infinite tolerance of practices widely or wholly divergent from the theory. His writings, therefore, reveal at every stage a spirit of revolt where the full-blooded life of the individual comes into conflict with rules of conventional moral-

ity or social propriety. Indian life has been ground down to a level of deadly uniformity with every vital and daring emotion, either suppressed or frowned upon. Individual freedom has been denied except to the very powerful or to the most exceptional, with the result that not only has social life been cramped and deprived of its savour, but the literature of the people has suffered and been canalised into something which has no relation to reality, and which has sought refuge into either meaningless jugglery of words or of profane and highly coloured versions of life attributed to the Divine. The monotony as well as the limited range of themes of most of our Indian literatures since the 11th century are wholly due to the kind of life that was lived by the people, for literature is but a mirror of people's heart and mind.

Munshi's golden age of Gujarat ranged from the 9th till the 12th century. He has devoted ten of his romances to the glory that was Gujarat. Each of these works centres round Gujarat and its varied cultural life, with its wealth, with its domestic politics and those incessant intrigues and squabbles with the neighbouring States. Munshi wends his way through all this complicated tangle with the sure touch of a born politician and diplomatist, and what had hitherto remanied as merely the life of a provincial court suddenly becomes a dazzling stage with glittering figures striding across it. Munshi is a born raconteur; he makes use of the petty intrigues as a vital element in the development of his main narrative and in unfolding the traits of his principal characters. As a matter of fact, the greatest contribution that Munshi has made to the literature of Gujarat is his exceptional capacity to tell a story—effectively, to the point, and with an unusual gusto in putting, as it were, all the various *dramatis personae* of his tales on the screen. The story moves swiftly, unimpeded by long-winded descriptions either of the past or of ancillary circumstances, couched in pedantic sentences which were the stock-in-trade of most of Munshi's predecessors; and in this connection, it would perhaps be well to say a few words about Munshi's manner of writing.

The prose literatures of most Indian languages are of recent origin, and date almost from the 1st quarter of the 19th

century. The prose was modelled on the style of classical Sanskrit romances, and the style was generally heavy, ornate and overloaded with Sanskrit words, rather than the language of the daily discourse. The inevitable result was that the story itself was lost, or maintained only an attenuated thread through all this maze of conventional descriptions, reminiscent of the Sanskrit *mahakavyas,* but hardly germane to the swift flow of modern fiction.

Munshi may be regarded as the first important writer of modern fiction in Gujarati. Almost before the advent of the movies, Munshi wrote novels where the various characters flitted across the scene with the rapidity and precision of a modern film. Munshi's language was the very reverse of the studied pedantry and high falutin of his predecessors. His sentences are short, but charged with the vitality of a living tongue. It is not as if Munshi could not spin out on occasions sentences of exquisite beauty and of great descriptive power; but he is far too much interested in the doings of his characters and in working up the events, which furnishes the necessary background to his romances, to pay much heed to descriptive padding, which had been for centuries the traditional pattern of prose-writing in this country.

Curiously enough, Munshi has never written any verse though writing of verse on every kind of subject is a common enough accomplishment amongst the *literati* of India. Munshi's mind has perhaps been far too concrete to enable his Muse to soar, but it has undoubtedly helped him to concentrate on his immediate objective in matters literary or otherwise. Munshi has been able to switch from one activity to another with astonishing ease and his versatility and varied range of interests have not therefore, seriously affected the quality of his work. He is always able to laugh and though he will be soon sixty, he is astonishingly young at this age, and I should imagine that for many a year to come he would continue to make important contributions to the life of Gujarat in various spheres by his passionate devotion to the unity of Gujarat and his faith in the future of the Gujarati literature.

Munshi's position in the literature of Gujarat is assured. He has been a successful novelist, dramatist, historian, essayist, educationist, journalist, politician, speaker and lawyer. His life has been full and he has spent years of devoted service to the cause of Gujarat and the Gujarati literature. His literary output has been considerable and there is no phase of literature where he has not tried his hand and distinguished himself. I feel, however, that his abiding contribution lies perhaps in his romances of medieval Gujarat, his passionate plea for the oneness of Gujarat and the Gujarati culture, his brilliant essays on Narsinha Mehta and some of his shorter plays, where he successfully lays bare some of the cracks in our social life. Munshi has a keen and unfailing sense of humour which sometimes has the effect of ruthlessly exposing the pretentions behind an imposing facade of sanctimonious humbug so dear to an old and conventional society. Munshi has had a very full life in every sense of the word. He has led a rich life of creative activity, practical success and social distinction. He has doubtless been one of the formative factors in the life of modern Gujarat.

3

Man of Letters

In a country like ours where mortality is notoriously low, it is doubly gratifying to note the triumphant march of men that count over the barriers of years and age with their activity unshaken and their spirit unclouded. To celebrate and commemorate the jubilee of such men is pleasant duty of those who love and admire them. In honouring Munshiji on this occasion we are but paying a deserved tribute to what he has been and to what he has done these sixty years of his life. Longevity is a continued opportunity for the individual to pursue his work and to prove his worth. And prolonged existence, if it is varied, useful and beautiful, is certainly something worthwhile possessing, worthwhile coveting. The truth of this is clearly and amply illustrated in Munshiji's life and work. Significant work and solid achievement spread over quarter of a century lies to the credit of this distinguished son of Gujarat. Lawyer, patriot, reformer, scholar, educationist, lover of art and aesthetics, novelist, story-writer, dramatist, journalist, legislator, administrator, inspirer and humanitarian, possessor of high ideals, deep thoughts and generous impulses—Munshiji's life and labours have been both rich and varied. And today, as he strides into his seventh decade, his withers are unwrung, his plumes unruffled and his spear unbroken. He is really sixty years young! His vitality has no dependence on time; it belongs to his spirit. It is a green heart that supports his grey head! Those who know him intimately easily realise how active in habits, how agile in mind and how youthful in spirit he is. His wonted buoyancy, animation, daring directness—astonishing, delighting, amusing, irritating,—these still abide with him as virtues and graces. Age sits but lightly on his scarcely wrink-

led brow! He is at once the wonder and despair of persons much younger than himself—a challenge to grandsires cut in alabaster! He strives and holds cheap the strain, learns nor accounts the pang, dares, never grudges the throe. Tireless and timeless, 'tameless, and swift and proud,' he is ever intellectually alert. It is no exaggeration to apply to Munshiji what Swinburne said of Browning: "his building spirit leaps and lightens to and fro and backward and forward as it lives along the animated lines of its labour, springs from thread to thread and darts from centre to circumference of the glittering and quivering web of living thought, woven from the inexhaustible stores of his perception and kindled from the inexhaustible fire of his imagination." He never thinks but at full speed; never acts except with full vigour. Is it any surprise then that Munshiji —this man, entirely self-made, with no other advantages save those which he himself has created—gives us cause for legitimate pride in our species? And, on an occasion like this, when the diamonds of his illustrious life are being strung together, is it not appropriate to offer him the jubilant greeting of the Poet—"Hail to thee, blithe spirit!"

Munshiji as a man-of-letters challenges attention by the versatality of his interests and the prodigality of his gifts. In his own provincial language, Gujarati, he has written invaluable novels, stories, romances, essays on aesthetic subjects, historical and pauranic dramas, social plays, autobiographical sketches and miscellaneous essays. In English he has published one monumental historical survey of Gujarati literature, works on history, politics and education. And innumerable readers of the weekly—*The Social Welfare*—remember how since its inception on nineteenth September, 1940, till the present time, Munshiji has been contributing to it week after week, with unfailing regularity, articles and essays covering a wide range of interests. In all these writings, whether in Gujarati or in English, Munshiji exhibits the same enviable characteristics of intellectual integrity and imaginative faculty. He has a tremendous grip both over his matter and his manner. The torrent of ideas seems to be never subdued in him. It pours forth from him in a prodigal flow. A devout student of Indian and foreign litera-

tures, a sincere scholar and ardent follower of our ancient culture, an enthusiastic votary of all that is good, beautiful and true, Munshiji is a bubbling fountain of ideals and ideas, dreams and deeds, hopes and aspirations. And the manner in which he expresses these things is no less attractive and artistic. Quite a consummate master of the spoken and the written word, he can as easily and successfully sway the hearts of his hearers as he can energise the minds of his readers. The tongue and the pen in his hand prove mightier than the sword or scimitar in the hands of a soldier. He may not, like Keats, look upon fine phrases as a lover, or like Shelley scatter his words as ashes and sparks among mankind. Nonetheless, he knows the value of words, the worth of phrases, the beauty of chaste and idiomatic utterance, in short, the subtleties and the beauties of language. With these twin gifts—a fertile brain and a facile pen—Munshiji as a man-of-letters is one who illustrates the truth of the Shavian saying—"This is the true joy of life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one...... the being a force of Nature instead of being a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

II

Munshiji's writings in English consist of speeches made in the Bombay Legislative Assembly as member and as Home Minister, in the Senate of the University of Bombay and on public platforms, of statements issued to the press and interviews given to journalists on important occasions, of addresses delivered at institutions and conferences, and of notes and articles contributed to the *Social Welfare*. And these cover a surprisingly wide range of subjects—varied in their interests and vital in their importance. Selections from these writings and speeches are to be published shortly under the title—*Sparks from the Anvil.* And as the task of editing them with an introduction has been assigned to the present writer, he refrains from elaborating upon this aspect of Munshiji's literary activity in the space of this article. However, a brief

reference to this and a general estimate of its significance may not be out of place here, if for nothing else, at least for the sake of presenting in perspective a complete picture of Munshiji as a man-of-letters.

In some moments of frank self-confession, Munshiji observes, both in private and public, that expression in the English language is not his strong point, that he cannot always command the appropriate word or the expressive phrase or the correct idiom. This is clearly an exaggeration of a tiny fraction of the truth. Munshiji is definitely not among the Indian masters of the English language, not among those who have used it as if to the purpose born. As a stylist in English, as a successful wielder of this subtle language, Munshiji comes not near masters in the line like Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Aurobindo, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru or the late Rt. Honourable Shrinivasa Shastri. But to say this is not to relegate Munshiji to the ranks of second-rate writers of English in this country. As one who has used his own Gujarati language to marvellous effects, he has an instinctive apprehension of the subtleties, beauties, melodies and sound-values of words in general. And this one can easily perceive in Munshiji's speeches and writings in English. His style is trenchant, well-set, and bears the stamp of its writer's vigorous personality. There is paucity of words, no dearth of expression. Language seems to flow from his pen as fragrance from a flower enchanting all those that come across it. As his ideas sally forth in quick succession, they automatically adjust thmeselves into a coherent structure, and attire themselves in appropriate linguistic garb. And the most noteworthy thing is that Munshiji's expression suits itself admirably to the thought behind it. He is, at times, emotional, at other times sentimental and retrospective; still at other times, intellectual, logical, argumentative. Whatever the tone and temper of his thoughts and ideas, his language serves as a faithful mirror to them. To have the gift, the gift of pregnant thought and suggestive expression is indeed to possess an enviable characteristic. Munshiji as a man-of-letters is happy in having this. He is a distinguished Knight of the Burning Pen!

To go into a few details of Munshiji's writings in English, easily the most monumental work of Munshiji in English is *Gujarata and Its Literature* (Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd. 1935), with a foreword by Mahatma Gandhi. The volume is the first and the best of its kind both in its attempt and achievement. It presents to the English-reading public an authentic and connected history of Gujarat and its literature—from the earliest times to the year of its publication. The chapters in the volume were originally intended to be delivered as extension lectures under the Post-Graduate Studies Department of the Calcutta University. But this could not be done as Munshiji's participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 came in the way. However, during the two and half years between 1930 and 1934 that Munshiji spent in jail, he found the necessary leisure and peace of mind to arrange the chapters in the shape of a volume. And in spite of the handicaps that jail life imposes on work of this nature, it must be said to the credit of the author that he has succeeded in producing a memorable record—reliable in its facts and figures, deep in its insight and sympathetic in its interpretation, impartial in its treatment and just in its assessments. The twenty-one chapters that comprise the three parts of the volume do not make dry-as-dust reading—as works of this kind often do. The literature of each period is descriptively and critically sketched on the background of its historical setting. Furthermore, the author has given well-deserved importance to the interplay of two factors in the history of Gujarat, the two factors, namely, (1) the individuality of the Gujarati expressed through a consciously directed group life; and (2) the influence of the culture which originating with the early Aryans, has maintained the homogeneity of Indian life and the continuity of its traditions for the last three thousand years. With characteristic merits like these, the volume has a uniqueness of its own, and takes its rank with the memorable histories of English Literature written by Prof. George Saintsbury and Dr. Compton Rickett. Well has the volume earned the praise of Dr. A. Berriedale Keith of the University of Edinburgh: "........It is not merely pioneer work, but the field is vast, and the languages used

range from Sanskrit through Prakrit and Apabhramsha, to old and Modern Gujarati, demanding an erudition remarkable in one who has given so much time to public service and who himself is an outstanding author, whose creative art (in the words of Dr. Taraporevala) has brought life and beauty to Gujarati fiction and drama, and whose philosophy of life has given to Gujarata both joy and strength. It is indeed the outstanding merit of Munshiji's work that it is written by one who has studied deeply both the great masters of European literature and the theory of their art, and who can thus put true values on the work of the long series of writers of Gujarata. Where it is possible for me to test his judgment, it appears singularly happy and accomplished, and Gujarata should be deeply grateful to him for his work of love, which recognises her accomplishment in letters, but with admirable candour does not seek to conceal her shortcomings. But the author in his love for his own land is fully conscious that "Gujarata can have no meaning and no future except as an expression of Indian culture......" But great as the work is, it is not the only laurel of Munshiji's literary reputation. He is not merely the chronicler of literary history; he is himself the creator of abiding literature!

Next in importance comes the series of the four sumptuous volumes planned and published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan under the title—*The Glory that was Gurjaradesha* with Munshiji as its General Editor. Of these, only two volumes have been published so far—Volume I entitled *The Pre-Historic West Coast*, and Volume III entitled—*The Imperial Gurjaras.* The two other volumes, two and four, *Gujarat in the Magadhan and Classical Ages*, and *Life and Culture under the Chalukyas of Patana*—are under active preparation. This monumental work was undertaken in connection with the millennial celebrations of Mularaja Solanki who came to the throne of Anahilavada Patana in the year 998 of the Samvata era. The Gujarati Sahitya Parishad which conducted the celebrations entrusted the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan with the task of getting a history of the Chalukyas of Gujarata prepared in English. And who else but the energetic and the erudite President of the

Bhavan could have undertaken the tremendous responsibility? It was thus that Shri Munshiji became the General Editor of the volumes planned. But he has not remained as a mere editor in name. The two published volumes bear the impress of his personal interest in and close supervision of the work. In Volume One, Section two, entitled "Aryans: Pre-Vedic and Vedic" is written by Munshiji. Further, Volume III, entitled *The Imperial Gurjaras,* is entirely his production. Readers of these two will not fail to be struck by the vast erudition exhibited throughout. To reconstruct the past history of a people or a country, especially when authentic materials and evidences are scarce, is indeed an uphill work. It bristles with knotty problems of all kinds. For instance, in the treatise on *The Imperial Gurjaras,* some of the important problems successfully tackled are—(1) Were the Gurjaras foreigners? (2) Was the word "Gurjara" as used in this period in the primary sense indicative of a race or homeland? (3) Was the region from the Karnal District in the Punjab to the Saraswati in the South known as Gurjara or Jurz? (4) Were the people of modern Rajputana, Malwa and Gujarat homogeneous between 500 B. C. and 1220 A.C.? There are no less than one dozen problems like these—problems involving intimate acquaintance with epigraphy, iconography, geology. geography, history, sociology and allied subjects. Taking all this into consideration, it is no exaggeration to say that this work redounds greatly to Munshiji's worth, as a scholar. It is an admirable contribution to ancient Indology.

Akhand Hindustan (published in January 1942, by the New Book Co., Bombay)—proved to be quite a provocative volume at the time of its appearance and presented Munshiji before the public in a peculiar light—both favourable and unfavourable. Champions of Pakistan beheld in the author of *Akhand Hindustan,* a sinister hot-gospeller of Hindu domination, while protagonists of Indian nationalism found fault with him equally for unnecessarily raking up old sores, for rubbing the communal problem on the wrong side. But neither of these, it may be said without fear of contradiction, understood Munshiji and his work properly. *Akhand Hindustan* reveals

him as a devout student of the history and culture of India, as a sincere interpreter of its essential unity, and as the vigorous supporter of the concept of undivided India. The volume contains about thirty chapters—articles written and speeches delivered by Munshiji between 1938 and 1942—all of which are the outcome of an effort to study and present the indisputable unity which runs through the history, culture and life of India. And, if at times, the reader finds the tone and spirit of the book to be somewhat aggressive, it is to be attributed to nothing else but to the fact that Munshiji believes in the fundamental unity of India, which unity, according to him, is not only to be felt but visualised, worked for and, if need be, fought for. Against the background of the unfortunate communal problem, it is possible to regard the book as a partisan one. But if once we ignore it, we cannot but appreciate it as a correct and comprehensive interpretation of the soul of India—which has preserved itself intact in spite of the writhing agony experienced by its body politic. *Akhand Hindustan* is no mere playful or vindictive counter-blast to the fireworks of the Pakistan cry: it is a sincere emphasis and assertion of the inalienable oneness of India. It is thus that the volume is at once an exhibition of and a tribute to Munshiji's sturdy sense of patriotism, his grasp of realities and his courage of frank utterance.

The Changing Shape of Indian Politics—(Deshmukh & Co., Poona, 1946)—is in reality a revised, altered and considerably enlarged edition of Munshiji's earlier work—*The Indian Deadlock* (1945). The first edition was a collection of the author's articles in the *Social Welfare*, suitably altered and concluded with the memorandum he submitted to the Sapru Committee. To them have now been added, in the second edition, several other articles, so as to bring the book up-to-date. Though written at different times during a period of three years, these articles form connected studies of the problems of Indian politics, the shape of which has been changing from day to day, and will surely be helpful to those interested in the future of India. The work is designed to help the country to think on lines which would lead to power and freedom. The author is convinced that India cannot be a Dominion. Its in-

ternal complexity and its international frontiers by land and by sea made it more than a Dominion, if the British army and navy were replaced by the Indian substitutes and less than a Dominion, if the British army and navy were retained. Realising this, the author points out in no uncertain terms, that when foreign rule is eliminated we want to be stronger and independent, not a prey to external danger or internal conflict. On the whole, Munshiji offers a noble defence of India's claim for unity and her right to freedom. With great critical acumen and characteristic vigour he examines Prof. Coupland's case against Indian Nationalism and exposes the many logical fallacies that vitiate the well-known Oxford scholar's thinking. The articles incorporated in this volume bear ample testimony to Munshiji's remarkable insight into the puzzling politics of the country, to his original way of thinking and arguing and to the compelling power of his pen. Among other things, the author presents a brilliant analysis of the kaleidoscopic changes, through which Indian politics has recently passed, and makes many valuable suggestions that reflect the constructive bent of his mind. The volume is marked by bold and fearless thinking, independent judgment, penetrating analysis and lucid exposition. *The Changing Shape of Indian Politics* is, without doubt, an outstanding contribution to permanent Indian polical literature.

Among the many miracles of the Gandhian era in Indian Politics, the one which is quite phenomenal is the moulding of innumerable heroes out of clay. Under the magic spell of the Mahatma's personal magnetism, men and women, who otherwise would have continued in their routine existence, have turned out to be rebels and revolutionaries, patriots and politicians, sacrificing their time, energy and money in the service of the country. Among the vast multitude of Gandhi votaries, quite a good number have acquired the reputation of being closest to Gandhiji, of being his staunchest adherents, of being correct and able interpreters of his programme, policy and philosophy. One such is Munshiji whose personal document—*I Follow the Mahatma* (Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1940) ranks with memorable interpretations of Gandhiji and his message

such as Dr. Pattabhi's *Gandhi and Gandhism* and Acharya Kripalani's *The Gandhian Way*. Munshiji's book does not claim to be an objective study of Gandhiji, or a record of his achievements. It is an authentic narrative of Munshiji's personal reactions to Gandhiji and his activities, a record of how his outlook on many essentials of modern Indian life underwent a change as a result of contact with Gandhiiji, and how, in the new light, Munshiji came to view Gandhiji and the technique and philosophy for which he stands. It is likely that many, including Gandhiji himself, may not agree with some of Munshiji's views and conclusions. But the merit of the book consists in the fact that it has been worked out in the light of personal experience and convictions. It is as such that the book may be of some help to the general reader in understanding the mighty Indian Colossus who bestrides the world today. Munshiji narrates in the book how he came to accept the Mahatma's political philosophy, and in so doing reveals not only the development of his own personality but also the tremendous power which Gandhiji possesses over all with whom he comes in contact through his creed of Truth and Non-Violence in politics . Further, some of the chapters in the book give us the inside story of many crises in India's struggle for freedom. Two chapters are devoted to the language problem in India, and the last part of the book stands out as the finest exposition of Gandhian philosophy. Of particular interest are the author's views regarding the application of Gandhian principles to the new world order that must emerge from the present chaos in the world. It only remains to be added that Munshiji in this book lives up to his literary reputation. His powerful yet breezy style renders the reading of the book lively. The reader is borne from chapter to chapter with never-fagging interest. In the end he is sure to find himself the richer for the experience.

The Ruin That Britain Wrought (Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay 1946)—is a powerful book. In this Munshiji draws a true and naked picture of India in her pitiable economic aspect. He knows, and none better, that there is in the country a hunger for Swaraj, and that this hunger is growing and will grow till the stage where satisfaction cannot be denied.

He also knows that this hunger is not a matter of sentiment, not even the handiwork of, what at one time were dubbed, pestilential agitators. He is aware of the cause, and that is why he says indignantly: "It is the work of the Britain. They came to this land a hundred and seventy-two years ago. They destroyed its industry, drained away its resources, kept it underdeveloped, undernourished, backward—in their own interests ....Inspite of a few spectacular fortunes in the hands of a very small number of industrialists, British rule has definitely brought growing poverty to India. Incontrovertible figures establish the fact....India has everything except self-rule, and her millions of men, women, and children are unhealthy and under-nourished. Their lives are blighted by a constant fear. Five giants, Want, Ignorance, Disease, Squalor, Idleness, have the Indian masses in their grip more than the people of any other land." There is nothing new in Munshiji's indictment. But, as we know, even the most obvious of truths require repetition, lest they be pushed for ever into the hinterlands of apathy. So is the case with the ruin that Britain has wrought in the economic structure of India. Munshiji's book is another eye-opener to those who have eyes and yet see not. Further, the book reveals how ardent a patriot Munshiji is, how thorough he is in his analysis of facts and figures, and how righteously indignant he can be when occasion demands it.

But however varied Munshiji's gifts are, his claim to immortality as a man-of-letters rests on his creative works of art —works in which we get a clear picture of his powerful personality, of his original idea and his unequivocal expression, of his superior intellect and soaring imagination. To this category belong Munshiji's essays on the *Gita*—shortly to be brought out under the name *The Message Eternal*—and his recent publication—*The Creative Art of Life* (Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay, 1946). Both these are sure to enhance their author's reputation with the readers of his English works.

Perennial has been the inspiration of the *Gita* down through the centuries. Ever since the *Gita* was first churned into shape in the dim past of history, it has never been out of fashion or favour. "The *Upanishads* are the cows, Krishna is the Milker,

Arjuna is the calf, and the nectar-like *Gita* is the excellent milk"—observed Sir Radhakrishnan once. And on this "honey dew" and "milk of paradise" have been fed countless souls, both in this country and abroad. Each passing age, each eager and aspiring soul has discovered afresh the underlying truth of the *Gita*—Shankara, Ramanuja, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Lokamanya Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi—these are among the innumerable interpreters of the message of the *Gita*. To this august band belongs Munshiji. Not that he is religious in the orthodox sense of the word or spiritual in its showy aspect. Far from it, for he is a notorious iconoclast of many a meaningless custom and convention. The fact is that his essays in the interpretation of the Song Celestial reveal to the public comparatively less known aspect of his sturdy personality. As a lawyer he is a luminary, as a patriot he is second to none, as a writer in Gujarati he is first rate, as an administrator he is shrewd, as a lover of the good things of life he is human, as an organiser he is thorough. But the best of him, I feel, lies not in these, but in the basic spiritual texture of his self, as coloured and moulded by the *Gita*. None else except those who have understood correctly the deepest implications of the *Gita*, and whose understanding of it is instinctive, can ever speak of it in a convincing and authentic tone. Munshiji's *Gita* essays bear this indubitable stamp As one reads through the chapters—especially those entitled—"The Urge to Action", "Dynamic Unity", "Svabhava: The Basis of Perfection", "Chaturvarnya: Its Ideal and Practice", "Sublimation of the Sex Urge: The Path of Beauty and God"—one cannot but rub one's eyes in wonder at the illuminated interpretation of the underlying conceptions. He who reads a masterpiece touches a stalwart spirit, communes with a great soul. Here, in *The Message Eternal*, we have one such work of abiding worth and value.

The Creative Art of Life belongs to a class by itself—a book dealing with a profound subject in a profound manner. It bears the sub-title—Studies in Education. But it does not deal with pedagogy or psychology in the conventional sense of the words. The meaning of education in the real sense of

the term, as understood by our wisest ancients, the cultural, creative, and spiritual aspects of education, the ultimate end and aim of human existence, all these silhoutted against the glorious background of the ageless thought and traditions of India—this is *The Creative Art of Life.* Indian culture is not a plant of hot-house growth. "It must be viewed as the movement of a Central Idea flowing through time, absorbing alien influences, sometimes running underground but always inspirnig individuals and movements to express it under the changed conditions of their time. In each period it has expressed itself, with easily ascertainable permanence, in the life of our great men, in the output of our art and literature, in our solution of vital problems. This Central Idea is a living reality. Men have derived exquisite joy by living it. It has passed through the fresh coverings of succeeding ages. This reality must be studied in forces, movements, motives, and ideas which have persisted through time. It must be rediscovered by each generation, and above all, lived. The resurgence of Asia has to be achieved. Humanity which is in the grip of force and fraud and a regimentation based on a denial of human dignity, has to be weaned away from Westernism. This can only be done by India, free and great, which is a true embodiment of her culture. Indian education must prepare men and women fit for their work. It must make them *Bharatiya* in spirit and outlook, true to the Motherland, striving ceaselessly for the integration of their own personality and prepared for the day when the world would learn from them the rudiments of the supreme Art of Life-energy taught by the Masters." Thus argues the author in *The Creative Art of Life.* The book is not a blueprint for Indian education; it is only a sign-post. Munshiji's emphasis on the "formative" education as against the merely "informative", on creativity and on the development of *Svabhava,* his conception of the teacher as an apostle of culture and of the pupil as an artist in self-culture—these are things worth the careful consideration of all those who have the best interests of Indian education at heart. Munshiji's ideas are not vague theories impossible to be translated into practice. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan of which he is the Founder-President is a

standing proof of the praticability of his ideas and theories. The Bhavan, according to him, is not an institution. It is a movement, a cause. Its objects, from the very beginning, were to encourage the study of all aspects of Indian Culture; to help in its re-integration, and to study and spread the fundamentals of Aryan Culture. The Bhavan is a focal point where ancient Aryan learning is fostered alongside of modern Indian Culture against a historical background. Munshiji as the author of *The Creative Art of Life* has rendered an inestimable service to the cause of Indian education and culture. The book is a *vade mecum* for all those who are sincerely interested in its subject, one on which they can rely for inspiration and guidance.

Concluding this section dealing with Munshiji's writings in English, it may be briefly observed that what one notices first is the refinement of his ideas and utterances. There is no pose or dilettantism about him. With his deep reverence for Indian culture, his sincere attachment to the teachings of the *Gita*, his sturdy sentiment of patriotism, his intellectual honesty and emotional bias—Munishiji speaks with a voice at once authentic and authoritative.

III

"Munshi, as a prose writer, is among those of the first rank in the language; to the minds of some he has no equal among the modern writers of Gujarati prose. His creative art has brought life and beauty to Gujarati fiction and drama, and the philosophy of life preached by him through his works has given to Gujarata both joy and strength"—thus concluded Dr. I. J. S. Taraporevala his chapter on Munshiji in *Gujarata and its Literature*. This tribute was paid a little more than ten years back, and it holds good even today, holds good with added lustre. During this decade Munshiji's reputation among the Gujarati reading public has not only become stabilised but also increased—which is as it should be. At the very outset of his literacy career in 1911, Munshiji was violently attacked and as eagerly admired—attacked by those who did not like

the unconventionality of his ideas and his expression and admired by those who welcomed him precisely for the same unconventionality. During the quarter of a century that has elapsed since his *debut* on the literary stage of Gujarat, Munshiji has slowly but surely effected a conquest of the hearts and minds of his vast reading public. Those who scoffed at him then admire him now in unstinted terms. The whirlgig of time has succeeded in securing its sweet revenge. There are no two opinions today with regard to Munshiji's place in Gujarati literature. By common consensus of critical opinion his place is next only to that of Mahatma Gandhi. Modern Gujarati literature is rich and varied and progressive; great in its freedom, its art, its technique and its creativeness. Not a little of this is due to the advent of Munshiji among its ranks.

Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi, who was born in 1887 of a respectable Brahmin family of Broach, started his literary career when he was about twenty-five years of age—under the pen-name of "Ghanashyam". Since then, in spite of preoccupation with his legal profession and with other multifold public activities he has found time to pour forth an uninterrupted stream of stories, novels, plays, and essays. That Munshiji made a mark for himself at the very outset may be evidenced from the compliment paid to him by Dewan Bahadur Krishnalal Jhaveri in his *Further Milestones of Gujarati Literature* (1921): "Recently a novelist worthy of the first rank among the writers of that class suddenly blossomed out. Till he began in A.D. 1911 with some short stories and published them with great hesitation, concealing his own identity under the significant nom-de-plume of Ghanashyam, no one suspected that he had latent powers. In the opinion of many, Kanaiyalal has, by adhering to the correct canons of novel writing and by his powerful delineation of human character, dislodged his senior (Govardhanram) Kanaiyalal's style is always suited to the occasion. There may be in his writings a recklessness in the spelling of words, there might be an unconscious echo of English phrases translated into Gujarati, but on the whole the style is virile, vigorous, cultured and chaste."

Munshiji himself is conscious of his weaknesses and virtues as a writer. With the candour that is characteristic of him he gives a just estimate of his own merits and demerits as a writer in a letter addressed to Prof. I. J. S. Taraporevala in 1933. As the letter is reproduced elsewhere in this volume, I refrain from quoting the relevant portion in this context.

IV

Munshiji is a prolific writer, and his published works are characterised by volume, variety and vigour. These may be classified into groups and considered as such.

I. SOCIAL NOVELS (1) *Verni Vasulat* (Revenge Accomplished 1913-1914), (2) *Kono Vank?* (Whose was the Fault? 1914-16), (3) *Svapnadrashta* (The Dreamer, 1924-25), and (4) *Sneha Sambhrama* (Confusion in Love, 1931-32).

II. HISTORICAL ROMANCES (1) *Patanni Prabhuta* (The Greatness of Patana, 1916) (2) *Gujaratno Nath* (The Lord of Gujarata, 1918-19), (3) *Rajadhiraja* (The King of Kings, 1922-23)—these three constituting a splendid triology about the Calukyas of Gujarata; and (3) *Prithvi Vallabha* (Lord of the World, 1920-21), (5) *Bhagvan Kautilya* (Lord Kautilya, 1924-25), the first of another series dealing with the Imperial Mauryas, (6) *Dhruvaswamini Devi* (1928), (7) *Jai Somnath,* (1940), (8) *Lomaharshini* (1945), and (9) *Bhagawan Parashuram* (1946).

III. PAURANIC DRAMAS:—based on ancient mythological and historical traditions of India, (1) *Purandara Parajaya* (The Conquest of Indra, 1922), (2) *Avibhakta Atma* (The Soul Undivided, 1923), (3) *Tarpana* (The Obsequial Offering, 1924), (4) *Putra Samovadi* (Like unto a son, 1929), (5) *Lopamudra* (1933) consists of one novel *Vishvaratha,* and three plays (6) *Shambarakanya* (7) *Deve Didheli* and (8) *Vishvamitra Rishi* dealing with the life of Rigvedic Vishvamitra and the first authentic incident of Indian history, the war between the Aryan king Divodasa and the Dasyu king Shambara.

It may appropriately be mentioned here that eleven of the works—novels and dramas—of Munshiji deal with material

drawn from myths in the *Rig Veda*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. Considered in the chronological sequence of the subjects dealt with, and not in the order in which these were written and published, all these constitute what one may call—The Epic of the Ancient Aryans. This is perhaps the most conscientious, painstaking, original, and hence, the most glorious work of Munshiji. The different works were written at different times during a period extending over 23 years and yet they have great artistic coherence and architectural unity. It is for this reason that this aspect has been dealt with at considerable detail in a separate article.

IV. SOCIAL PLAYS: *Vava Shethnun Svatantrya* (The Freedom of Vavasheth, 1915), (2) *Be Kharaba-Jana* (Two Bad persons, 1924), (3) *Ajnankita* (The Obedient, 1927), all the three published in one volume entitled, *Samajik Natako*, (Social Plays), (4) *Kakani Shashi* (The Uncle's Shashi, 1929), (5) *Brahmacharyashrama* (The Hermitage of Continence 1931), (6) *Peedagrasta Professor* (The Afflicted Professor, 1933), (7) *Dr. Madhurika* (to be published shortly), (8) and *Chhiye Tej Thik* (Best As We Are) (1946).

V. SHORT STORIES: *Mari Kamla ane Biji Vato*, a collection of stories in one volume.

VI. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL: (1) *Adadhe Raste* (Half Way), (2) *Seedhan Chadhan* (Steep Ascent), 1943, (3) *Mari Binjavabdar Kahani* (My Irresponsible story), Travel to Europe, 1943, (4) *Shishu ane Sakhi* (The Child and the Comrade, 1932) a *Katha* or prose-poem.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS (1) *Ketlaka Lekho* (Some Writings, 1925-26) Volume I and II, comprising of essays, notes, addresses and character sketches, (2) *Gujaratna Jyotirdharo* (Leading Lights of Gujarat) (3) *Thodank Rasadarshano* (Some Interpretations of Beauty, 1930) being a study of literary art and bhakti with special reference to Gujarati Literature, (4) *Narsaiyo Bhakta Harino* (1933) a life of the poet, Narasimha Mehta, with a critical introduction dealing with his works and age, (5) *Narmad*, a biography of Narmad, the first among moderns, (6) *Adi Vachano* I & II (1933)—inaugural ad-

dresses of the author as the President of the Sahitya Samsad from 1923-1929, and (7) *Ketlik Vibhutio* (Some Great People) to be published shortly.

Considerations of space prevent a thorough and detailed examination of each of the works mentioned above. Each work has its own peculiar merits—and some of them, their demerits as well,—and a detailed account of them will fill a volume by itself. Further, some of the aspects have been dealt with in the other essays included in this volume. All that may here be done, therefore, is to refer to them briefly in their general perspective.

As a novelist of the first rank Munshiji has considerable consolidated reputation. It began even with his first work of fiction—*Verni Vasulat* (Revenge Accomplished). Though it is the author's maiden attempt, so to say, it has no trace of amateurishness. On the other hand, it is regarded by established critics as "one of his best, because it strikes the key-note of all his later writing." In spite of this praise, it cannot be said that the work has no faults. The structure of the plot, the denouement, the style and language have blemishes of one kind or another. But the general impression that the work creates makes one oblivious to the defects. The reader is attracted by the theme itself—the struggles of young Jagat against dire poverty and cruel machinations and his final success in achieving "perfection" according to the guidance of Anantananda, inspirer and teacher, embodiment of the Ideal. As one finishes reading the novel, one cannot but realise how the author must have kept before his mind's eye the vision of India, great in the future as she was in the past.

Kono Vank? (Whose Fault,) is a novel which suffers from poor characterization and absence of humour. And not even the fact that it has been successfully rendered on the screen can make it a great work. But though poor as a novel from certain points of view, it serves the purpose of spotlighting the reader's attention on one of the ugly sores in Hindu Society —namely the trickery and treachery of self-styled religious teachers. The brightest point of the novel is provided by the patience and devotion of the angelic Mani who nurses Mucha-

kunda—even to the extent of remaining with him while her own child is drawing her last breath.

Svapnadrashta (The Dreamer) is a socio-political novel—mostly of the mock-heroic type, but serious at times. The story depicts the adventures of a band of callow youths carried off their feet by the political storm that followed the partition of Bengal. Of course, the dreams evaporate, and the young heroes are resigned to their humdrum fates—one as a share-broker, another as a schoolmaster, a third as an incipient holy man, and so on. And as one contemplates the story, one cannot help getting the impression that the characters tend to be caricatures —upholstered by the author's elaborate descriptions and directions than on the strength of their own speeches and actions. And one finds it somewhat difficult to reconcile oneself to the author's rather audacious mixing up of real and fictitious personages. Notwithstanding this, one cannot but admire the fine miniature pen-pictures of the great leaders in the political history of the last generation like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Aurobindo Ghosh, Lajpat Rai, and Bepin Chandra Pal. Further, one need not hesitate in agreeing with the opinion that "this work is a realistic picture of the likes of thousands of young students in India who begin as idealists and end by settling down to the humdrum ways of their fathers".

That Munshiji as a writer can be rollickingly and boisterously humorous, if he so chooses, can be seen from *Sneha Sambrahma* (Confusion in Love). An extremely impressionable professor with an extremely soft corner in his heart for his many fair admirers, gets involved in a delicate love affair with the wife of a Shamsher Bahadur. Complications arise and assume the proportions of a tangled skein. In the end, let down badly by the Shamsher Bahadur's wife, the disillusioned professor realises that he has made an ass of himself. In many a place in the book there is humour of the purest kind—humour that is cleansing in its effect. The characters are clearly drawn and are full of life, and also true to life. The impressionable professor, the uncouth but loving wife, the daring Mohini, the

braggart Bahadur—all have an individuality of their own, and will be remembered for long.

Historical Fiction—whether we call them novels or romances—has always been a favourite with many readers, for it combines happily and harmoniously the two illusions of reality and unreality. "Historical Fiction", observes Alfred T. Sheppard in his *The Art and Practice of Historical Fiction*: "deals imaginatively with the past and can follow paths where Trespass Boards confront the pedestrian historian. The novelist has a wider range, he may set foot in the reserves of history, but on one condition; he may not make his habitation there, or may only build if part of his house stands within the demesne of the imagination. The really great historical novelists, it seems to me, are those who invest and surround their characters—the men and women of "lost years"—with the haze of wistfulness and glamour which is comparable to that gloss of film of pre-historic implements, and weapons; time's own work, not to be copied by any human tool or process." A successful historical novelist is the who takes certain events and characters of history and weaves around them a fictitious enchantment. He reconstructs imaginatively the life of the past—permitting neither historical facts to impede his fiction nor his fiction to violate the significance of historical facts. Among such renowned writers of historical romances and novels are Dumas, Hugo, Scott, and Bulwer Lytton. In our day, Jacob Wassermann in his *The Triumph of Youth* and Leon Feuchtwanger in his *Jew Suss*—have kept burning the torch of the historical novel. To the ranks of such writers belongs Munshiji as far as his historical romances are concerned. In fact, according to some, his historical romances, are his best novels. The well-known trilogy of *Patanni Prabhuta, Gujaratno Nath* and *Rajadhiraja* all deal with the most glorious period of Hindu Gujarata—the reign of Siddharaja Jayasinha. It was the time when Munjal Mehta, the minister, consolidated the power of Anahilavada Patana during the minority of Jayasinha Chalukya who later came to be known as Siddharaja. Fired by a love for Patana, the Minister destroys internal strife, introduces a strong government, and annexes Lata and Sorath to Guja-

rata. His love for the dowager queen, Minaldevi, reciprocated and yet held within stern bounds, furnishes the romance in the first of the three novels. The second and the third in the trilogy carry the story forward. They are dominated by the brilliant Manjari, the daughter of a Kashmiri Pandit who is saved from the cruel fate of being initiated as a Jain nun by the heroic Kaka, a soldier of fortune; eludes the persecutions of Uda Mehta, the powerful governor of Cambay; who first scorns the attentions of Kaka, wedded husband though he is and ends by being his devoted wife; and dies defending the fort of Bhrigukachha (Broach). The last volume closes with the triumphal procession of Jayasinhadeva as the overlord, Rajadhiraja, of Gujarata through the streets of Bhrigukachha supported by Munjal, Kaka and other important ministers.

These three works present Hindu Gujarata at its best and have made a strong appeal to the modern Gujaratis who lacked a heroic background. Some of the characters in the novels, which were mere names before, have now found a fond and permanent place in popular imagination. The galaxy of great figures—warriors and statesmen, chieftains and heroes and noble women—is a priceless ornament to modern Gujarati fiction. Apart from the strong and heroic characterization, Munshiji's art in this trilogy reaches a very high level of excellence. He is a painter with a large canvas, a big brush and a breathless manner. He delights in sharp contrasts—juxtaposing the comic and the tragic, the sublime and the ludicrous, the strange and the familiar, the beautiful and the bizarre. It is thus that these three works contain chapters which move and thrill and haunt as only great literature can. There is no doubt that as the author of this trilogy Munshiji reveals himself as a prolific artist, eminently resourceful, worthy of compare with the reputed masters in the field. In this saga of twelfth century Gujarata and Kathiawad, Munshiji excels the one Gujarati writer in the same realm—G. M. Tripathi of *Saraswatichandra* fame. Munshiji's *magnum opus* is throughout absorbing in its interest, full of speed and action, glorious adventure, tense emotion and things that thrill both young and old.

To the same status and category belongs another novel *Prithvi Vallabha*—dealing with the romantic figure of Munja of Dhara. As a work of art, one critic pronounces this novel to be "an exquisite cameo", and as "the best of the author's romances." Munshiji himself regards this work as "the most typical of my historical romances," and as "my most lucky work." Verily so; for *Prithvi Vallabh* has been translated into Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and Tamil, while in Gujarati it has run into several editions; it has also been put on the professional stage, on the silent screen, and has been the subject of a Minerva Movietone production.

Bhagvan Kautilya is the first of a yet-to-be published series, and deals with the period just preceding Alexander's invasion of India. It depicts the life of Pataliputra of the Magadhan age when the Nandas were the rulers, and in Naimisharanya where the *rishis* dwelt. Though the threads are partly Pauranic and partly historical, the development of the story is purely along on artistic lines. The hero of the work is Kautilya—also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta. Tradition has presented him as a hateful politician of the Machiavellian type—disregardful of the ethical aspect of the means to be employed in achieving the political aim. The greatest service that Munshiji does is to rescue Chanakya from this stigma, and raise him to the dignity of a sage of the Brahminical school whose sole object was to resort to revolution for the purpose of a better state of things in the body politic. Reviewing this book in the *Indian Daily Mail*, Bombay, for 14th September, 1929, Shri Narmadashanker D. Mehta justly observes: "Mr. Munshi is not only a careful student of the human mind and its motives, but is also an artistic lover of Nature. His description of Naimisharanya coupled with that of the Bhadraksha Ashrama is both sublime and beautiful. The moral aim of Chanakya is revealed at the end of Chapter thirty-seven in a very artistic manner: "The seer (Chanakya) arose and the dream of Naimisharanya was realized. He saw the sacred symbol 'Om'. He saw that mere asceticism without culture was useless; mere knowledge without self-control was a poor exhibition.

Both culture and control were linked together by the power of the concentrated thought of the seer."

Concluding this section dealing with Munshiji's social and historical novels, his estimate of his own work may be quoted with advantage: "The principal features which I brought to fiction in Gujarati were an interesting story, dramatic situation and dialogue and living characters. I was, and am still, first and foremost a story teller, not a novelist; and had before me the art of the greatest story teller in the World's literature, Alexandre Dumas. My stories, as critics have repeatedly pointed out are full of breathless interest. In *Patanni Prabhuta* and *Prithvi Vallabha*—the main plot occupies no more than a fortnight. The situations generally are full of dramatic possibility and the dialogue unfolding character swiftly carries forward the action . . . My principal effort has always been to restrict myself to painting human beings, not saints nor the conventional dummies so beloved of prudes and schoolmasters; nor pale abstractions, but full-blooded men and women who love and fight and sin and struggle as in actual life. My principal concern was the real drama of life, neither theories of life nor morals. In spite of more than three decades of effort on the part of critics to teach me the contrary, I have found it impossible to look upon a historical novel as anything but a romantic speculation. A bygone age as it actually was can never be created by a literary artist. He can beat the past either as an alien world and its men but myths, and occupy himself with hauling its upholstry into the present; or he can project the drama of life around him on the screen of the past. As I have understood it, the art of Kalidasa and Shakespeare, of Scott, Hugo, and Dumas, is of the later variety. And with my limited powers, I have always endeavoured to keep the ideal of this art before me and scrupulously discarded wooden dolls for human beings. Even the venerable figures of Puranic mythology have been kept rooted to the earth—though characters like Prithvi Vallabha, the gay warrior, Lopamudra, the embodiment of triumphant beauty and Parashurama, a human being as near to Divinity as is humanly possible, have, like the statutes of Phedias, more than mortal stature. This enabled

me, with some success to bring the historical romance into close correspondence with life. Romanticism, I felt, was too much in the clouds, and those also rather woolly."

V

Coming now to a consideration of Munshiji as a playwright—we take into account both his Puranic and his Social plays. It was in 1922 that the dramatic element in Munshiji's fiction clamoured for appropriate form and induced him to try the technique associated with modern dramatists of whom Henrik Ibsen is the model. *Purandara Parajaya*, the first of the author's plays, revolves round the Pauranic episode of Sukanya and Chyavana. In the next, *Avibhakta Atma*, it is the ideal of love that is the theme. It is in this drama that the author first combines the Greek and Indian ideas, more fully worked out in *Shishu ane Sakhi* later, that true lovers are but halves of the same soul, one soul in two bodies, that seeking unity through a succession of births they end in a Nirvana when they recognise their indivisibility and become the undivided soul. And who but Vasishtha and Arundhati, the finest pair in ancient Indian Tradition, could be chosen as a type to illustrate the author's idea? In the third drama, *Tarpana*, we have an unrelieved tragedy dealing with the myth of Aurva who destroyed the non-Aryan Haihayas and re-established Aryan supremacy under King Sagara. Aurva compels his pupil, Sagara, to sacrifice his love of Suvarna to save his country. Sagara, in a mad fury, obeys his master and destroys the King. Aurva offers his blood obsequies; and Sagara is crowned king of Aryavarta.

In these three dramas Munshiji has tried to bring semi-divine figures down upon the earth, endowing them with human feelings. The Puranic personalities lose their pale abstraction and develop strong human attributes. But the author's success in this respect is a doubtful one. Realism has failed him. "Divine honour paid to these great heroes for ages has removed from them all traces of human weakness, and their reappearance with human attributes only makes the situation melodramatic rather than realistic." In the next two plays, how-

ever, Munshiji fares better. The characters are more ably delineated and the situations better handled in *Putra Samovadi*—which centres round the familiar episode of Shukracharya and Devayani. In *Dhruvaswaminidevi* the majestic heroine with her noble steadfastness and devoted loyalty is a powerfully drawn character. The plot of the drama is reconstructed from the fragments of *Devichandraguptam* of Vishakhadatta, recovered by Sylvian Levi.

In his Social Plays Munshiji is more successful than in his Puranic Dramas. These are all sparkling productions—topical in their themes and racy in their tone and spirit. As the author himself admitted once, not without a twinkle in his eye, they are not to be read by those who are in love with respectability. Thoroughly modern in spirit and utterly unconventional in outlook, they upset the placidity of old ideas and settled convictions. It is precisely for this reason that these plays are the hot favourites of the younger generation, and are frequently put on boards by aspiring amateurs.

The main targets in these social plays are the hypocrisies and foibles of life. It is everyday realities that they deal with, and it is through rollicking comedy and hearty laughter that they convey their meaning and moral.

Literature has always been the most powerful and artistic vehicle for the spread of new and progressive ideas—ideas that rebel against the galling restrictions of convention-ridden society and effect radical departures in the thoughts and lives of men. Henry Fielding, Charles Dickens, Moliere, Henrik Ibsen, Bernard Shaw. To this group of writers who have blended harmoniously their reforming zeal with their artistic talent—belongs Munshiji. It is no exaggeration to say that "it was not till the days when Munshiji took up his pen to write social plays that certain prohibitions met their Waterloo. In a jovial, critical, mocking vein he faced the hitherto ignored topics and showed their absurdity and their mal-effects."

Samajik Natako comprises of three plays—*Vavashethnun Svatantrya* (The Freedom of Vavasheth, 1915), *Be Kharab Jana* (Two Bad persons, 1924) and *Ajnankita* (The Obedient, 1927). The first play deals with the comic story of a pitiable

hen-pecked husband who, inspired by the example of Belgium defying Germany, makes a bid for liberty from the iron domination of his shrewish wife, Reva. *Two Bad Persons* is a rather long play, but one which contains no dull scene or undramatic situation. Rambha, the heroine, is the type of the new emancipated woman who pursues her own way without meekly submitting to circumstances. She prefers the dashing, debonair Dr. Mohan to the rich, England-returned Ramdas, and complications arise, which in the end, resolve in her favour. Though it is somewhat fantastic in some places, the play on the whole is absorbingly interesting from start to finish. *Ajnankita* is a satirical tirade against unequal marriages and against a false sense of duty. The play is a bitter and cynical commentary on the sorry spectacle of one aspect of social life as it exists. In a note at the beginning of the play the author points out to the reader that so long as this state of society is in being, these plays have an important function to fulfil. They are realistic representations—holding the mirror upto human nature.

Kakani Shashi is one of the best and popular social plays of Munshiji. Centering round the serious problem of the status of women, it presents the charming, though disillusioned, character of Sashikala, a graduate of advanced views. She resembles the New Women of Ibsen and Shaw—intelligent, energetic, witty and bursting with new fangled ideas. The plot, action, characterization, language—are all commendable, while the humour in the play is subdued and the satire temperate. But it must not be forgotten that from the point of view of staging, the play has some defects such as long soliloquies, and too many exits and entries of the characters. However, it has proved to be popular and successful on the stage. The Gujarati Amateurs Association presented the play at the Opera House, Bombay before packed audiences, and the public as well as the Press paid well-deserved compliments to these performances.

Brahmacharyashrama (The Hermitage of Continence) was written by Munshiji when he was a political prisoner in the Yeravada Jail. In fact, the First Act is laid in prison, and the

dramatic personnel are political prisoners, compelled to observe continence while in jail, the fellow prisoners praise the virtues of continence, and decide to spread its gospel after establishing a hermitage for the purpose. After coming out, they do keep up thier resolve to found an institution for the practice of continence. But the fly in the ointment comes in, in the form of Pemli, the young niece of the old cook of the hermitage. Discord arises, and the noble scheme collapses like a house of cards. Dr. Madhubhai, the originator of the whole show, is disillusioned, but secures the sympathy and love of Pemli. In this play the author seems to be ridiculing the ideology of continence on practical grounds. Another humorous social play—*Pida Grasta Professor* (The Afflicted Professor) deals with the relations between teacher and pupil, and shows how things go awry if moral character is loosened from its moorings.

Munshiji has a rare gift of self-analysis. He sees himself as others see him, judges and values himself as others do. With this characteristic objectivity, he has estimated the worth of his own social dramas: "The social plays exhibit much greater realism (than the Puranic and historical dramas) and what may for convenience be called the comic spirit hunts down folly and foible through humour, satire, mockery and fun. In *Vavashethnun Svatantrya,* the comic spirit makes fun of an elderly henpecked husband who seeks freedom by flirting with a young girl; in *Be Kharab Jana* it pursues parents who want to wed an educated daughter to a conceited prig of a millionaire; in *Ajnankita,* the spirit viciously runs to earth the rich old man who buys a spirited girl for a wire, and the timid lover who prefers respectability to love; in *Kakani Shashi,* it hunts folly in the suffraget, the flirt, the schoolmaster, the virago, the poet and the tyrannical head of the family, in *Brahmacharyasrama* a broad farce, it hunts with shout and hallo, the little follies of political prisoners, the stupidity of the impossible idealist who believes that sexual self-control brings immortality, and the prude in man which covers sex-attraction under every plausible guise. "Whether the hunt has been successful, in each case, is not for me to judge. I have not succeeded with humour, as with satire, mockery and malicious

fun, if by humour is meant as Carlyle said—sympathy with the seamy side of things.'' The last part of the analysis raises deep aesthetic questions which may not be gone into at present. It may, however, be noted that Munshiji's humour, mixed up as it is with various ingredients, answers to George Meredith's conception of the Comic Spirit as the Sword of Commonsense, as the sweep of the hawk over heron.

VI

Munshiji has written several biographical and autoboigraphical essays and sketches including—*Adadhe Raste* (Half Way) his autobiography upto his fiftieth year. But none among these is more important and interesting and also more typical of the author, than *Shishu ane Sakhi* (The Child and His Comrade). It fits not in any classification already made of Munshiji's Works. It is not a *Katha*, not an essay proper, not a poem either in the strict sense of the word; it is neither pure romanticism nor pure realism. For want of a better name it has been styled as a prose-poem. It is personal, autobiographical, and depicts the very heart of the author, the anguish and ecstasy of his soul. The work seems to have ''welled forth from his inmost being quite spontaneously in an increasing stream of rhythmic prose of beauty and power.'' The piece tells us the story of the author's early marriage, of his discontent with his life, of his longing for the dream-companion of his heart, of the difficulties in the way, and the final happy conclusion.

The substance of his exquisite prose-poem may be briefly given. Shishu, the child, from infancy had an imaginary little dream-guide—Sakhi. But it remains only a dream. All the same, it grows with him, abides with him, and is the constant companion of his days and nights. In high orthodox style, Shishu is married in boyhood, takes to himself Sati, an ignorant, simple, devoted infant, and is miserable in her company. She is incapable of entering into or even appreciating Shishu's yearnings after beauty and joy and power. Shishu's only joy is to sigh for the bride who haunts his thoughts by day and dreams by night. He comes to the big city, grows prosperous, and has

children, but his real life is wrapt up in his imaginary romance, which he often describes in poetry. Shishu is considerate to Sati, but his soul is in revolt. At this time, when he is a respectable, wealthy, worldly lawyer, he meets a lady in whom he at once recognises Sakhi, the loved comrade of his dreams. Social, moral, and domestic ties have bound them to different spheres of life, and yet each recognises the mate of whom the other dreamed. He was a poet, and so was she; and they feel that each is but a half of a single soul, travelling through a succession of births, struggling to unite but in vain. They become friends and in creative poetry they seek the joy which the world denies them. Sati, the loyal Hindu wife, devoted and true, will not deny Shishu the joy he had missed so long, and which she could never give. All the three are honest, and true, each wants to suffer that the other two may be happy. But the situation is unnatural and leads to inexpressible misery. Shishu, borne down by physical and mental worry, wants to give up the world. But the decision is not taken. Meanwhile, Sati dies, years pass by; Sakhi becomes a widow, and the way to their union is clear. Shishu and Sakhi unite at least in happy wedlock; the misery of aeons is over, and the two halves meet together to become the whole. Life, now, is an endless round of happiness and ease. Both are happy, prosperous and powerful. The world for them becomes a sweet dream full of bliss. Once they go again to the rock under the shadow of the old temple. A phantom, sage-like and venerable, stands before them claiming them as his. He lays bare to them the true significance of their life as they live it, a life of mere worldly pleasures, fame and what people call "good deeds". He tells them of the glory of sacrifice; of true success to be measured not by what one acquires but by what one gives up. He lays bare the hollowness of modern life. True life is truth, *tapas* and *Ruta*—reveals the sage. He also tells Shishu of the significance of the institutions to which his life was dedicated. Among other things the phantom describes the meaning of justice as administered in courts. This is the call of the Great Spirit of Aryavarta, and the two companions on the Road of Life obey it. Thus closes this extraordinary work—full of passion, and beauty,

throbbing with love and tears and sacrifice. The style is highly sanskritised, and resembles that of the chants in the *Puranikas*. Florid and involved at places, devoid of the dramatic elements, and at places highly unrealistic—features unusual in Munshiji's writings—it contains greater beauty and power, both of imagination and expression, than any other single work of his. *Shishu ane Sakhi* has been the darling of the Gujarati reading public, and its author, too. I understand that Munshiji has been thinking of rendering the work in English. When this happens, I have no hesitation in believing that the author's fame will be greatly enhanced.

* * *

One group of Munshiji's writings which remains to be considered is his scattered prose compositions consisting of biographical sketches and essays and addresses and articles on subjects relating to literature and aesthetics. In all these Munshiji not only reveals himself as a first-rate writer of prose, but also gives us valuable *obiter dicta* conveying his ideas on life and his theories of art.

His address entitled *Jivanano Ullasa* (Joy of Life) and his *Pranalikavada* voice forth in no uncertain terms Munshiji's revolt against the prevailing literary convention. And we get a glimpse of his theory of life in his *Manavtanan Arshadarshano* (Vision of Human Greatness). Munshiji's conception of art and literature may be mentioned in his own words "The classical, that is, the literature which is truly effective and beautiful is the only real literature. A few can understand its underlying mystery. The cultured taste of only a few can enjoy it. A literary artist is entitled to complete freedom in the choice of subject and treatment; conventions, and, in particular, those imposed by religion and morals, destroy its soul. The sole test of literary effort is the success with which it reveals beauty. This beauty is the indefinable quality which makes creative art a source of undying joy, and is intrinsically different from moral good . . . And literary criticism can only be subjective and creative, that is it can only be a creative effort at interpreting beauty of art as it strikes, the critic's imagination."

Munshiji's conception of life, its high ideal and deep meaning, may be gleaned from a few of his utterances. "The secret of Aryan greatness lies in thus converting one's self into a characteristic force . . . When man loses himself in the one idea round which his individuality revolves, he becomes refulgent, powerful . . . He becomes an elemental force. He attains irresistible grandeur . . . Similarly, when the unity which the imagination of two lovers calls into existence is visualised by them as a single, undivided, changeless soul between them, the goal is reached. Love rules their life as Beauty . . . Thus the secret of all beauty and greatness is not in remaining what I am, but in realising something beyond it, not in "Being" but in "Becoming" *Bhavana.* For, in the process of "Becoming" only, do I realise enduring joy. In studying the fundamentals of love and religious devotion, of literary beauty and human greatness, of sacrifice and duty, I have found but one underlying principle. Beauty in life as in literature lies only in attempts to achieve, "Becoming", of evergrowing magnitude. In another place he expresses himself to an almost similar effort. "In normal human instincts and motives intensified by an ideal, and purified by readiness to suffer for it, lies the secret of strength and power. Strength, ambition, and pride have a place in healthy life; and so have laughter and tears; and even sensualtiy. Love is supreme law; and so is Beauty. Both attain perfection—one in inseverable unity of man and woman, the other in endless Joy . . . A dangerous life is far nobler than one of passive insipidity. Greatness, for man or nations, lies in greater and yet greater efforts to live as an idea through struggle and suffering, through *tapas* and *tyaga.* This outlook—life as an idea—is, to my mind, the distinctive greatness of Aryan culture. In the subordination of materialism by an indomitable and all pervasive idealism, I find the secret of India's undying life; and in the triumph of the later over the former, hope for humanity."

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Such is Munshiji—the man, his literary work and his vision of life. Need there be any doubt that here is an extraordinary individual with an indomitable will and in-

defatigable energy, one whose life is full of high ideals and generous impulses, noble dreams and great deeds, unceasing energy and untiring activity. With his view of life essentially artistic in its outlook, Munshiji is not only an artist in words, a painter of scenes and portrayer of characters, but also a creative artist of life. His literary productions, whether in English or Gujarati, bear the stamp of his bubbling personality. His contribution to Gujarati literature is such that posterity will not willingly let it perish. As a writer with original ideas and a new technique, as one who has trodden fresh fields and pastures new, Munshiji will long be remembered and revered as one of the makers of modern Gujarati literature, as one who has greatly enhanced its frontiers, broadened its outlook and widened its vision. All this is indeed inestimable service. To be a writer, and a successful writer at that, may perhaps be regarded as easy. But to be a pioneer and path-finder, to be a sapper and miner, and soldier and commander—all rolled into one, to cut through all this and then hoist high the banner of victory—this certainly is achievement worthy of the highest praise. Real literature is revelation. And all literature worthy of the name is the expression of the writer's life, of his aspirations, and of his ultimate aims. To delight by stimulating the imagination, to give a new beauty to existence by widening the realm of thought—these are some of the noblest purposes achieved by real artists. Munshiji may justly feel proud that he belongs to such a distinguished coterie of literary artists. Such artists are truly the voice of the Earth—the Earth whose poetry is never dead. Unmindful of the reward of their self-chosen work, they dare human respect, politeness, modesty, the timidity of social lies under which the heart is stifled. In the words of Romain Rolland—"if nobody is to be affronted and success attained, a man must be resigned all his life to remain bound by convention and to give to second-rate people the second-rate truth, mitigated, diluted, which they are capable of receiving." The real artists do not belong to this category. Munshiji has the honour of having dared to go against many literary conventions and of having succeeded in his adventure. With the sword of his unconventional writings he has opened the oyster

of a new literary world, and has given to modern Gujarat—a new vision and a new voice. Most people live as comfortable worldings—lured by no hope, beckoned by no dream, guided by no impulse, stirred by no emotion, inspired by no ambition, loving nothing on this earth and cherishing nothing beyond it, partaking neither in human joy nor in human grief, doing nothing —either creating or destroying. To lead such an unfruitful life is worse than existing like a block of wood or piece of stone. Such creatures hang like deadweights on life. On the other hand, to live actively and fully, giving free and full scope to all your faculties, to live in a manner useful to yourself and to others, to touch life at as many points as possible, and to thrill it at some points at least, to create goodness and greatness, to become a fountain-source whence the minds of other men will draw strength and beauty—this certainly is to live gloriously. Such has been the life of Munshiji as a writer and as a public worker. Creator of disturbing ideas and compelling visions, painter of human character in its manifold aspects, producer of literature that speeded the pace of renaissance in the realm of Gujarati letters, a human dynamo of driving power and creative imagination, an ardent devotee of the pen and a fervant ambassador of literary culture, Munshiji as a man-of-letters is a diamond that sparkles!

4

Historical Novels of Gujarat

The flowering of Munshiji's genius began with the creation of his Historical Novels or Romances. *Patanni Prabhuta*, the Greatness of Patan, (1916) heralded the dawn of the most glorious period extending over one decade in Gujarati literature. If it was an event in his literary career, it was also a landmark in Gujarati literature. A new type of literary creation was brought into being: curiously enough, its rise and perfection are seen in Munshiji's famous trilogy which begins with *Patanni Prabhuta.* The second part of this trilogy, *Gujaratno Nath* The Lord of Gujarat, was published in 1918-19, and the third part, *Rajadhiraja,* The King of Kings, in 1922-23. The other romances are *Prithvi Vallabha* (1920-21), *Bhagvan Kautilya* (1924-25) and *Jai Somnath* (1940). With the publication of *Gujaratno Nath, Prithvi Vallabha* and *Rajadhiraja,* Munshiji is recognised as the greatest master of the Historical Novel in Gujarati literature. In the trilogy he has selected a subject which has an epic magnitude and grandeur, relating to one of the organic periods of the history of Gujarat, viz., the reign of Siddharaja Jayasinha (1094-1143). Siddharaj Jayasinha was an empire-builder and under him Gujarat attained political and cultural greatness. Literature and art flourished, and this period produced the Aristotelian genius, Hemachandrasuri, whose achievements in the sphere of human thought were no less glorious than those of Siddharaja in war or statecraft. *Prithvi Vallabha* is based on *Munjarasa* in *Prabhandhachintamani* depicting the life of Munja, the king of Malva, in the eleventh century of the Vikram Era. The personality of Munja inspired Munshiji to create the finest work of art and beauty. Of this work it may be said in Carlyle's words, that it comes

'more direct and flamingly from the heart' of the author. *Bhagvan Kautilya* deals with the Imperial Mauryas. Kautilya, the most subtle and profound political thinker, is vividly portrayed. The life of the venerable sages in the Naimisha forest in its pristine purity and intellectual grandeur is described. *Jay Somnath* (written between 1936-37 and published in 1940) deals with the grim resistance and noble sacrifices of Bhimdev, the celebrated king of Gujarat, in 1082 Vikram Era, to defend the famous temple of Somnath on the coast of the Arabian Sea against the invading armies of Mohmud Ghazzanavi. The fury and grandeur of the crusade are vividly depicted and the characters—Bhimdev, Ghazzanavi, Gangasarvagna, Ganga and Chaula—are powerfully drawn. The book differs from the trilogy in respect of treatment and style.

II

Munshiji's historical novels lay the foundation of his literary reputation. They exercised the same spell over Gujarat as did the *Waverly Novels* of Walter Scott or *The French Revolution* of Thomas Carlyle over England. They embody the eternal elements of the history of Gujarat, and are tremendously popular. While in *Patanni Prabhuta* are seen all the elements of Munshiji's art in its formative phase, *Gujaratno Nath* and *Rajadhiraja* are the magnificent products of his mature art. The immortal *Prithvi Vallabha* is his masterpiece.

To Munshiji history is not a mere pageant of the past: nor is it an objective record of the rise and fall of kings and emperors. To him history is a human document. His poetic imagination takes up the dry-bones of history as its material and infuses life and vitality into it. Among the stones and ruins of Patan and Awanti he discovers an elevating wisdom and an undying faith in the Aryan culture. He presents in a most remarkable manner the imaginative reconstruction of the age of Siddharaja Jaysinha. We are lifted up under the spell of his art above the sordid level of the average existence and transported to that fragment of space and time—the age of Siddharaja whose epic singer he is.

Nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of the artist. The whole panorama of the visible world he presents before us. Living men and women with mighty passions, warriors, statesmen, kings and also the common men move on a vast stage in the trilogy and other romances, and we see them in their human setting. While he creates 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure,' he is not preoccupied with the dry-as-dust's fondness for local colour and historical veracity. Munshiji believes that at certain historical crises men of light appear to mould the destiny of a nation. Thus he is mainly interested not in the movements of history, but in those heroic souls who have left their mark on the process of history. He goes deeper into the creative forces of history and discerns a rhythm and a pattern. From its harmonies he has heard the message of the deathless vitality of Gujarat in the application ot the basic truths of the Aryan culture to the art of living. While he lays bare the soul of Gujarat in his historical novels he holds before us the wider vision of the Aryan civilisation. Gujarat is a living organism integrated to the eternal spirit of the Aryavarta. In the foundation of its being lies deeply embedded the dynamic teachings of Lord Krishna. Its spirit manifested itself in high-souled spirits like Munjal, Siddharaja and Hemchandrasuri. It manifests itself among moderns in Narmad (1833-1886), a revolutionary poet of Gujarat, and Gandhi, the embodiment of Aryan culture. Such torch-bearers are the architects of the destiny of Gujarat. They are the symbols of its aspirations, hopes and its faith in the values of Arya *Dharma*. With a song in their heart and a prophetic light in their souls they revitalise the nation and guide the people in spiritual crisis. This is his interpretation of history and it forms the very strata on which the super-structure of his historical romances is raised.

In re-creating the past and investing it with an irresistible splendour and magic, Munshiji is a wizard. His romances are lit up by that distinguishing quality of the romantic art, the renaissance of wonder. But we are not in a dream-world. From Awanti to Patan, and from Patan to Junagadh we are carried along in the royal courts, streets and homes, recognising all the absent realities and establishing complete intimacy with those

living figures of history. As a story-teller Munshiji is incomparable. He is never dull or heavy. The broad stream of the narrative flows vigorously and we are simply borne on it. There is no pause, there is no weariness. With him we no longer read a story, we live it. Such is the compelling power of his vision that by 'the willing suspension of disbelief' we share his delight, wisdom and abounding sympathy. While we read his romances, the joys, sorrows or passions of their characters become a part of our emotional possession.

To historical romances Munshiji has brought the poetry of existence. History thus becomes in his hand an interpretation of life. The wide range and variety of his characters indicate his comprehensive genius. While he has dealt with kings and king-makers in his romances, he has grappled with the fundamental passions of human life. The stuff which makes the eternal human heart is what intrinsically interests him. He has always stood for the dignity of the human personality. His vision is profound. His creative intuition penetrates to the permanent springs of human action. Love is one of the fundamental passions of life. In its consummation the very purpose of existence is fulfilled. It sustains and transfigures life and moulds destiny. All his characters, infinitely fascinating as they are, rise and fall, live and die by it. It is love which makes his characters such as Munja, Munjal, Siddharaja, Minal, Manjari, and Prasanna, 'the very raw material of a divinity'. Such living characters can never be conceived and created in an objective aloofness of an impersonal art. They demand the very life-blood of the creative passion of the author. There is something positive of Munshiji's personality in the dignity, nobility, power, strength and the passion for beauty in these characters. Munshiji has the courage of a great artist to follow his vision in depicting the inner life of the soul. He naturally loathes the conventional codes of a commonplace art. He detests sentimentalism or sham romanticism which gives a false view of life. His humour is sharp, penetrating and free from malice. It ranges from a smile to a hearty laughter. Sparkling and humane, it reflects his firm grip on life.

What makes his characters so unmistakably real is their unfailing humanity. This evokes a maximum emotional response from us. Munja, Munjal, Minal and Manjari are colossal beings, but they are essentially true to life. Because they are intensely human, they are often baffling, unpredictable and mysterious. In Munshiji's romances there are no villains. Sheer evil, like disease, does not interest him. His healthy curiosity and wide sympathy allow unfettered freedom to his characters. They live with a brilliant intensity. While their conflicts on the physical plane are described in vivid dramatic situations, their inner restlessness, anguish and conflicts are delineated with a *finesse* which reveals the author's deep insight into life and his profound spiritual experiences. Munshiji shows an unrivalled knowledge of the most subtle and complex working of the feminine heart. In the portrayal of Minal and Manjari his creative art approaches its high-water mark. The two-fold action moves steadily to the climax and with it characters grow. There is a complete harmony of action and character in his novels. Characters move in a setting which reflects—and sometimes influences—their moods and often illuminates the action.

Munshiji's romances are spread over an immense stretch. There is a sense of largeness in them. Their plots and subplots are firmly woven into coherent wholes. There is no inflating padding—a common besetting sin in romances. The structural dimension, design, proportion and harmony make them impressive. In all romances his art seeks to create an unity of impression which is admirable. And his art is essentially sensuous, and evokes the participation of all our senses in it. The fine excess of his romantic art is ostensibly seen in *Prithvi Vallabha* and in some portions of *Gujaratno Nath*. Lyrical beauty, word-painting, wealth of felicitous imagery and luminous atmosphere characterise his prose. Fine in texture, vigorous in movement and lucid in expression, his prose has flexibility and variety enough to depict the whole gamut of human moods.



Among the literary men of Gujarat
(1944)

III

Jay Somanath is a courageous work of art. The main theme is the mortal crisis in the soul of Gujarat in 1082 Vikram Era. A devastating blow in the form of the invasion of Mohmud Ghazzanavi falls on Gujarat. The success in the first round goes to the invader, but the resistance soon develops into a powerful offensive with the result that such a short-lived success becomes a major military disaster. Partisan historians have always painted coloured and lurid pictures concerning Mohmud's invasion of Gujarat. Historical veracity, detachment and balance, are lacking in such presentations. Munshiji has undertaken an extremely difficult task in this historical novel, and only the unquestionable integrity of his vision and art could enable him to walk on the edge of a sword. Lesser artists would have succumbed to temptations of twisting the facts of history to suit wishful ends in the handling of such a subject. Munshiji has not only scrupulqusly adhered to the main facts of history but presented a fine portrait of a great military leader. The task is all the more difficult in the light of his innate love of the Aryan Culture which the temple of Somnath embodied from times immemorial. With admirable courage, honesty and restraint, he has achieved a miracle of art.

The invasion of Mohmud was a challenge to the complacent, disunited and isolationist rulers of Bharat. Religious implications apart, such stupendous military operations conducted against all kinds of odds establish the fact of the superior strategy and the highly mobile and efficient fighting machine of the foreign invader. The Hindu rulers of Bharat lacked a full and balanced view of the invasion. Naturally, despite the excellent human material and vast resources, they lost in the first encounter. The fall of the temple opened their eyes and they soon rallied themselves in a concentrated, well-organised counter-attack which positively destroyed the morale of the invading armies. As it grew in intensity forcing Mohmud to return through the desert of Kachchha, his so-called victory ends in an unparalleled disaster. No doubt, the invasion roused the reli-

gious conscience of the people of Gujarat whose epic struggle is crystallised in the leadership of their great King Bhimadev. Thus *Jay Somnath* is the most moving, fascinating and heroic account of the crusade that Gujarat fought in sheer self-defence to save its soul.

What is most striking in the book is the sustained atmosphere of the crusade—its fury, gusto and grandeur. The two dances of Chaula which form the prologue and epilogue to this mighty drama soften its otherwise unrelieved heroic tone. The nobility of thought and dignity of treatment harmonise with the epic struggle. In *Jay Somnath* the imaginative amplitude of Munshiji is staggering. By subtle suggestions and evocative allusions is revealed the stream of eternity as represented by the temple of Somnath: the historical and spiritual continuity of the sacred temple from *Satyayuga* right up to *Kaliyuga* is represented with a rare art. Around this holy symbol which is the centre of the life divine, the epic struggle takes place. Its inspiration is beyond calculation. The doings and sacrifices of the inspired characters of this crusade are therefore superhuman. The wanderings of Sajjan Chauhan in the rain of fire in the desert, the supreme courage and sacrifices of Ghogharana and the miraculous awakening brought about by his spiritual body, the burning passion of Samant and the most glorious resistance and recovery of Bhimadeva assume elemental proportions.

The soul of the crusade is Gangasarvagna, High Priest of the temple. He is a pilgrim of eternity whose soul-force keeps the heavens high and stars bright. He represents all that is best and abiding in our culture and civilisation. He is a powerful character whose unfathomable depth can comprehend the whole destiny of mankind. To understand him is to understand the meaning and message of this great book. Gangasarvagna stood as a mighty sentinel and bulwark against the inroads of ignorance and evils on the eternal temple. He is a guardian angel of Aryan civilisation. In the tragic catastrophe of the nation he alone holds the light and rekindles the hearts of

people. This great Brahmin inhabits both heaven and earth. The most moving and memorable scene in the book is his standing between the blow of the invader and the holy *lingam*. The incomprehensible anguish, compassion and other-worldly majesty of this great soul are delineated in a few highly concentrated words. He alone realises the meaning of the mystery of the invasion and the fall of the temple. Ignorance, superstition, scepticism, and religious materialism had grown in the fold. Shivarashi or Kapali are crude expressions of *avidya*, ignorance. These dark forces can only be purged by a total annihilation. Mohmud is an accident in the eternal sport (*lila*) of the Supreme. With this realisation he drinks the bitterest cup of sorrow and bleeds and dies for the ignorant and suffering humanity. He is a spirit of Nilkanth. He has drunk the deadly poison for the enlightenment and joy of the universe.

Chaula is an incommensurable being. She is not of this earth. She embodies deathless Love which is the purest form of *Bhakti*. She is a born *gopi* whose cry is a song and whose gesture is a dance. Her surrender to the Undivided Soul discovered in the manifestation of Shiva casts an ethereal light on her personality. She saw a glimpse of the Divine in the sublime resistance of Bhimadev and she clung to him. The vision fades away and the touch of the earth brings her bitter sorrow and disillusionment. But Somnath indwells her, and with the rise of the new temple comes her resurrection. She again blossoms out and dances and at last merges into her Lord.

Among other characters, Bhimadev, Mohmud, Samant and Ganga are happily drawn. Bhimadev, the lion-hearted King of Gujarat has many great qualities of leadership. His undying faith in Somanath, high patriotism, fierce resistance and superhuman heroism form a glorious chapter of the history of Gujarat. He symbolises the martyrdom of Gujarat in combating the unprecedented peril which encompassed Bharat at that time. The final victory comes to him crowning his noble sacrifices. Mohmud is a great military genius brought up in alien traditions. He has the singleness of purpose and the practical wisdom which leads him from success to success. He has a con-

siderable personal charm and his hold over his men is admirable. He inspires them and leads them. In the most trying moments he does not lose his heart. Samant is perhaps the saddest man. He is the man behind the whole resistance. He suffers most and loses everything in pursuit of a patriotic ideal. The burning passion to destroy the invading armies keeps him wonderfully alive through innumerable crises. One of Chaula's earthly links is her affection for Samant. They are to some extent kindred souls.

Jay Somnath is a poignant and sublime tragedy . All the elements of high tragedy are here: the high seriousness of the theme, great and noble characters and their fascinating humanity, sorrow and suffering and the final peace and resurrection. Gangasarvagna is the protagonist whose lot is cast in the midst of pigmy humanity. The evil of ignorance represented by Shivarashi and Kapali priests bring an alien invasion which destroys the sanctity of the temple. The tremendous waste of so much fine human material as a result of pettiness and obstinacy is appalling. The invasion and the destruction of the temple is a mystery. The unfathomable anguish and crucifixion of Gangasarvagna are moving. Final peace comes to Chaula, and a brave new world is born under Bhimadev. It is the tragedy of a nation which temporarily lost its hold on the eternal values. But there is the re-birth of the nation. The evil is shed and a new awakening arises. On the ruins of the old temple a new one is built. Every *yuga* builds its own temple according to its light, but the bedrock remains—the bedrock of Aryan Culture.

Jay Somnath is an unique historical novel and differs in technique and style from others. The style is mature and resilient. The thought-content often overburdens the art. There are scenes of profound beauty and sublimity. The fusion of the spiritual and the physical struggles, the symbolic undertone and the timelessness of the theme invest this historical novel with a distinctive character.

(i) The eleventh day of the bright half of Kartik, 1082, Vikram Era. The vast crowds of merry pilgrims are moving on their way to the temple of Somnath. To them the temple of Somnath stood as an earthly paradise and a gateway to the life eternal. The temple of Somnath was a living reality—an image of eternity in the flux of Time and Change. Indestructible it stood there throughout all the *Yugas*. Soma in *Satyayuga*, Ravana in *Tretayuga*, and Shri Krishna in *Dwaparyuga* had built this temple in gold, silver and sandalwood respectively: it was designed by Vishvakarma himself, and the celestial singers had come here to sing hymns to Shiva. The living faith of Gujarat has rendered the holy place beautiful and prosperous. All that the human mind can create in wealth and beauty was there. It was also a great centre of Hindu culture and civilisation. Day and night the sacred hymns in praise of Rudra were being chanted, and in the hall of prayer the dance of the temple-dancers was continuous from dawn to midnight. Thousands of lamps were shining bright and the innumerable temple bells were ringing at every moment.

Gangasarvagna, head of the Pashupat cult of Lakulish, was the High Priest of the temple. Such were his spiritual power and moral authority that the ruling Kings of Bharat were most anxious to carry out even the smallest of his wishes. All over Bharat believers saw Somnath through him.

Four hundred temple-dancers lived in the colony. They had dedicated themselves to Somnath, and their be-all and end-all was the soulful music and dance before the deity. Their dance was both a prayer and worship. The middle-aged Ganga, shrewd, practical and loving, was their chief. Ganga was very close in spirit to Gangasarvagna and had a loving hold over him. Her eighteen-year-old daughter, Chaula, beautiful in body and soul, was to dance this evening in the temple. This was her maiden dance. She was dreaming for a long time of this supreme moment of her life. Chaula is utterly untainted by earthiness in feelings and thoughts. She is wedded to Somnath. She has often seen divine visions of Somnath telling her that she is His unique dancer! Somnath indwells her. Chaula

is an ethereal being whose *summum bonum* is to sing and dance before Him as long as she breathes. Her gifted mother has taught her all the eighteen branches of dancing, twelve branches of histrionic art and seven branches of music. Today was her test day. She would unfold her soul in her maiden dance before her Lord. Her mind is assailed by doubts and misgivings as to the success of her dance, for she believes that her success would depend on the extent of His acceptance of her as His dancer. Has she not spent many years in rigorous penance to make this momentous occasion a great success? Will that all go in vain? Will it bring a realisation of her dreams? Too long Chaula has dreamt of the divine art which would for ever enthrone herself as His dancer. The temple of Somnath is her world and her sole concern is to live as a little loving dancer in the eyes of her Lord Somnath. Unlike her mother she has no ambition of ruling over temple dancers. Even Gangasarvagna has a personal interest in the success of Chaula's today's performance.

In a magnificent setting of the evening prayer Chaula's dance begins. The inner temple wears the most majestic appearance the sacred *lingam,* covered with the *bili* leaves and multi-coloured flowers, is being sprinkled with holy water through the golden vessels: innumerable lamps studded with gems are burning and the learned priests are chanting beautiful hymns in the praise of Shiva. The music of conches, bells, drums, and pipes is elevating. The sanctity and grandeur of the atmosphere have indeed created another Kailasa on the earth! Gangasarvagna, the living embodiment of the Pashupat cult is conducting the prayer. For fourteen years he has led the prayers. For the devout pilgrims it is a heavenly sight to see this holy man offering his homage to Somnath. When benedictions are over, Bhimadev, the lion-hearted King of Gujarat comes forward and requests Gangasarvagna to allow him the privilege of getting the temple repaired and renovated that year. The holy man approvingly nods and smiles.

"Now begin the dance", gently spoke Gangasarvagna. The shy Chaula exquisitely dressed walks to the centre with hesitant steps. In a moment nineteen years are being un-

rolled before Gangasarvagna. An exalted vision of Love—which has transfigured the earthly existence of Gangasarvagna and Ganga rises to his mind! Chaula was the child of love. Sustained by the encouraging words of her mother and the gentle smile of Gangasarvagna, she begins the dance with prayer and immediately looks possessed. Her long penance throws herself into a mystic trance. The poetry, passion and joy of the dance are exalting. It is not a dance in the usual sense: it is the classic penance of Parvati reborn in music and movements. Her attitudes, gestures and movements express the alternating moods of Parvati: her rhythms speak of hesitations, hopes, fears and restlessness surging in her heart. There is a perfect emotional harmony between the temple music and her dance. Slowly the mood changes. Like Parvati she expresses her impatience and indignation in dance. Her heart cries out in anger. Rhythms are generating fiery sparks in the atmosphere. Then in a sudden flash she is blessed with the sublime vision of the spirit of Shiva engulfing her body and soul. An indescribable ecstasy is flowing from the dance. Chaula's dream is realised. Her dance defies all rules and restrains of art. Her heartbeats are being echoed and re-echoed in the jingling anklets and the dancing drums. The supreme moment of her triumph has come. She cannot stop the dance, for it is born of overflowing love and devotion: and her love is inexhaustible. At last, physically exhausted but spiritually gratified, Chaula collapses on the floor. Music stops. Admiring pilgrims are lost in awe and wonder. Overpowered by joy at Chaula's divine dance Gangasarvagna rises from his seat and lifts her up. Holding the unconscious Chaula in his hands he implores Somnath, "Supreme Lord, accept this little dancer. Henceforth she will dance before you on every Shivaratri as long as she lives." "Yours in this life and the life beyond"—the unconscious Chaula is heard muttering.

Damodar Mehta, one of Bhimdev's ministers, brings depressing news about the invading armies of Mohmud Ghazzanavi. He has rushed to Somnath Patan in violent hurry to inform Bhimdev that Mohmud has invaded Thaneshvar and

Kanoj and that his armies are heading towards Sapadalaksha. It is a grave emergency and his master must return to the capital, Anahilavad Patan.

"The ultimate aim of Mohmud is to break the temple of Somnath", Damodar summed up briefly his mission.

"Does that *Yavan* desire to lower the flag of my Lord? Indeed, the human ego does not seem to fear even the wrath of God," Gangasarvagna smilingly said.

"Mohmud is more dreadful than *Yavan*".

"Let him walk into the mouth of death. I am ready to face him. Gurudev, I see in this calamity a blessing of Somnath. I am ever-thirsty for big battles. Now I will get a warrior like Mohmud to fight with, and you will see the valour of Bhimadeva", Bhimadev spoke.

"My son, Truth ever wins. Somnath may bless you with success", Gangasarvagna replied.

Outside the temple there was the Kapali colony. They followed the *Vam* cult. Their hideous rituals of wine, blood and bones were revolting. They worshipped *Bhairav* and *Tripursundari* by offering human sacrifices. Physically and otherwise they were an ugly lot. Kank Yogeshwar, their preceptor, reaches the seashore in the evening and suddenly notices Chaula bathing in the sea. He tries to catch her and take her as an offering to *Bhairav,* but the dramatic intervention of Bhimadev saves the life of Chaula. In a melodramatic struggle Bhimadev strangulates the Kapali priest and leaves him there in a horrible plight. Bhimadev had already seen the wonderful dance of Chaula and was touched by her celestial beauty. When Chaula regains consciousness, he discloses his identity.

"I am on my way to fight the *Mlechchha* of Ghazzani", he told her.

"Oh, return soon after beating him. Our Lord Somnath will protect you," Chaula replied.

"Will you wait for me"?—Bhimadev could not suppress his thoughts.

"When you return I shall be at the feet of my Lord Shiva", Chaula's apparently indifferent reply was a slap on his face.

He felt slighted. But the news of the death of the Kapali priest soon sent a wave of terror in the hearts of the people who interpreted it as an indication of the coming wrath of God. They feared that a great calamity would soon befall them. Even Shivarashi, the chief pupil of Gangasarvagna, was among them.

Sajjan Chauhan and his son Samant had also arrived from Ghoghagadh to offer their homage to Somnath. Gangasarvagna tells him about the impending invasion of Mohmud and asks him to return to Ghoghagadh forthwith to stop Mohmud from entering the desert . For this purpose he is asked to undertake a whirlwind return-journey and organise the first line of defence there. The eighty-year old Ghogharana, his father, is still a terror in Ghoghagadh, and Sajjan is definite that he would make mincemeat of Mohmud's armies there. Samant has seen Chaula's dance on the previous night and was enamoured of her loveliness. While leaving Somnath Patan, Chaula, at the instance of Gangasarvagna, gave him the holy water and blessed him with victory and safe return. Samant cherishes this blessing and plans for his next move. Every moment is precious. The great floods are rushing on. In order to save time Sajjan decides to cross the desert by a short but hazardous route. Samant is told to proceed to Jhalor through Abu. The parting of the father and son is very painful. But they are inspired by the sacred task which their Guru had asked them to undertake in defence of their ancestral faith. Both the father and son are on a very urgent mission and no risk is too great to fulfil it. Sajjan has taken a fast-running camel and is rushing on his way to Ghoghagadh.

(ii) Four hard days have passed in the desert. Sajjan Chauhan is on the sacred mission of spreading the message of the crusade. On the fifth day terrific sand-storms begin to blow all around: blinding, burning clouds of sand are rushing from all sides. Sajjan Chauhan, clinging to his remarkable camel, is caught in this hell-fire: he feared that in a moment he would be

done to death by huge moving pillars of hot sands. He loses his way and is desperately running about in different directions to escape the unending death-dealing waves of hot sands. Only Faith is sustaining him: 'Jay Somnath' is on his lips: how can his Lord forget him in such a crisis? He is in His hands and is bound to emerge unscathed from this mortal hurricane. On the tenth day, suddenly, he hears the wild screeching of hundreds of vultures. Was it a sign of a fresh battle? Had Mohmud already crossed the desert? These thoughts begin to disturb him. As he goes along he notices rows of half-covered dead bodies forming a great trek in the desert! A cold shudder passes through Sajjan who realises the immensity of the invading armies. Further on he sees a little desert village and moves towards it. Not a soul is there. Its desolation is ghastly. Huts and houses are all looted and broken. The village temple is desecrated and destroyed. Even the trees had lost their leaves and wells their water! Sajjan is distressed at these barbarous acts and begins to doubt wisdom of his having taken an unknown route in the desert: he fears that he might have to wander there for many days and delay in his mission would undermine its very object. He is in a fix. With a brave heart he pursues his journey and meets a search party of Mohmud's armies! Sajjan's fears come true. Mohmud must have crossed Multan, Nandol, and Sapadalaksha. But his faith in Somnath is invincible. He thinks that His Lord must have some hidden purpose in bringing the invader so deep into the interior of the land! Perhaps He wants him to be His instrument in bringing them to their defeat and doom.

Sajjan offers his help to the search party and is taken to Mohmud. When he reaches Mohmud's camp, he is astounded by the impressive array of armies and the vast equipment of Mohmud. The camp was slightly organised, and Mohmud's resources seemed unlimited: innumerable camels, elephants, horses and other animals: thousands of tents flying flags of Ghazzani: endless rows and formations of armies: huge piles of novel and deadly weapons and enormous provision of food grains for the armies. It was no wonder if the armies of Gwalior, Kanauj, Delhi and Sapada-

aksha were destroyed by these ferocious men of Mohmud. Having broken the age-old temples of Mathura, Mohmud was on his way to Somnath Patan. Everywhere his armies had rained death and destruction and had taken away all the wealth for Mohmud. Sajjan meets Mohmud and advises him to give up the main desert track as the vast armies of Rajputs are awaiting him at its end. He suggests that there is another route in the desert and he could guide him if he so desired. The shrewd invader was anxious to save as much army as he could before he actually reached Somnath Patan. He wanted to go to Anahilavad Patan quickly and so welcomed any assistance in this plan. He therefore accepts Sajjan's suggestion. Sajjan too was playing a deeper game. Thus he agrees to help Mohmud and leads his men across the desert. After four day's journey Sajjan is heard praying to Somnath, "Lord Rudra, where are your fiery sand-storms? Why this delay?" There is a suspicious murmur in the armies about this strange guide, but Sajjan moves on relentlessly leading them into the abyss. The dark and threatening sand-storms seem to be coming and within a few moments millons of Mohmud's men are in the death-grip of the fierce sandstorms.

In these storms Sajjan sees a vision of his ninety-year old father, Ghogharana, praising the unparalleled heroism of his son who in the great cause has faced singlehanded the deadly forces of destruction. Mohmud was cool and collected even in the midst of such a catastrophe. His immediate anxiety was to save a large part of his fighting strength in this disaster. He quickly divides his army in three parts and orders that at least the middle and the rear armies must return in haste. One third of the army which formed the spearhead led by Sajjan meets a terrible fate. In the hell-fire of the raging sandstorms all perish. Sajjan and his faithful camel lie buried in friendly embrace in the heaps of hot sands. His last thoughts were those concerning the defence of the temple of Somnath. His last words were 'Jay Somnath.'

But Mohmud is a seasoned soldier. He does not lose heart by this calamity. He kneels and thanks Allah for having saved at least two parts of his armies. With an amazing zeal he re-

groups his disordered armies and puts new life into his frightened men.

As directed by his father, Samant is on his way to Jhalor. The ruler of Jhalor, Vakpatiraj was a near relation of Ghogharana. Near Jhalor Samant accidently meets Vimal, Prime Minister of Bhimadev. They both are on the same mission of creating a united front against the invasion of Mohmud. The seventy-year-old Vakpatiraj is too proud and complacent to agree to such a plan. He tells Samant and Vimal that Mohmud had already sent his emissary to solicit Jhalor's help. Mohmud wanted that there should be no obstruction or opposition to his march to Somnath Patan. To their horror and surprise Samant and Vimal learn that the foolish old man of Jhalor had already acceded to Mohmud's request. Vakpatiraj thinks that because Bhimadev is in a tight corner he has sent his minister to him for his help. The wise minister persuades the old King of Jhalor to understand the fatal consequences of his tacit approval of Mohmud's invasion to the Somnath temple.

> He says, "My Lord, this is not a calamity on Gujarat alone. The *Mlechchha* is coming to destroy the temple of Somnath. This is a call of religion and culture."
>
> "These are mere tales of Bhimadev. Why did he not rush to Mathura to defend its temples when attacked and destroyed by Mohmud?"
>
> "But, Sire, is it ever possible that Mohmud could pass through Sapadalaksha, Naddul, Jhalor and Abu and reach Somnath Patan".
>
> "He could never come anywhere near Jhalor so long as we are here".
>
> "Then he can take another route for Somnath Patan. Your inaction is unhelpful. It is pregnant with disastrous consequences. It will enable Mohmud to reach Somnath Patan and to break the sacred temple. Do you realise that the fame of all the Kshatriyas will be in the mud for ever."
>
> "Somnath is Bhimadev's ancestral temple. Hasn't he got enough strength to protect it?"

The old overweening king of Jhalor failed to understand the vital issue of the invasion. His mind was wallowing in self-

centred glory. Samant and Vimal do not see any wisdom in further wasting time with him and they decide to pursue the emissary of Mohmud who having got concessions from Jhalor is on his way to Marwar.

They succeed in tracing him and creating temporary confidence in his mind. Samant and Vimal tell him that they are sent by the ruler of Jhalor to help him in his task of getting assistance from Ranamal Rawal of Marwar! For a while they journey together but at a suitable opportunity fall upon him and kill him instantaneously. Samant exclaims, "All the enemies of Lord Somnath will meet such a fate." Samant and Vimal now separate. Vimal must hurry back to Bhimadev to inform him of these developments. Samant must go to Ghoghagadh and meet his father there. He is unaware of the terrible tragedy that has taken place in Ghoghagadh. At the moment he is happy with the thought that he has struck the first blow at Mohmud and checkmated him in his foul project.

As he moves on his way he meets a large number of refugees, pale and frightened, carrying the breath-taking tales of the havoc wrought by Mohmud's armies. They had heard the most fantastic and unbelievable stories of Mohmud's mythical might. Some fugitive army men tell him that Balamdev, a Chauhan hero, fell fighting the invading hordes in Sapadalaksh. Distracted by such grave news Samant reaches Bhammariya, a small place near Ghoghagadh, and he breaks down at the heart-rending scenes of utter destruction and desolation. Not a soul was alive there. The family temple of Ghogharana was thoroughly destroyed, its flagstaff broken and the flag torn in tatters. Samant walks like a living ghost among these ruins and shouts for those whom he had left three months ago. Only the mocking echo and terrifying loneliness greet him! A little bat was seen hovering and a big mouse gnawing something at ease! Mad with grief, he felt that he would collapse and die soon. The place was weird and the devastation unimaginably vandalistic. Is this a bad dream or is he awake? He could not trust his eyes to see such a cataclysmal change of Bhammariya.

At last he finds his family priest, Nandidatt there, the only survivor in Bhammaria. He has a pathetic story to narrate to

Samant—a story of the heroic sacrifices, supreme courage and high idealism of Ghogharana and his brave children. Nandidatt tells him that Mohmud did not want to fight Ghogharana. but wanted his passive acquiescence in his journey to Somnath Patan through the desert. Bribes were sent to Ghogharana whose righteous indignation sent a clarion call to all the Chauhan warriors in Ghoghagadh to stop the flood of the invasion. It was a Herculean task. Ghogharana and his brave sons were incalculably outnumbered by the invading hordes. The ninety-year-old Ghogharana roared like a lion and revealed the fire and fury of Rudra and Parashuram. He declared that he would not give even an inch of space for a passage to Mohmud. About a thousand men he collected and put them in strategic places on the fort. His honour was at stake: his religion and culture were in mortal danger: how could he sit and watch?

But Mohmud was a realist and did not wish to be side-tracked by unnecessary and wasteful conflicts. He did not challenge the might of Chauhan warriors for he realised that to storm the fort would necessitate a halt for many months or perhaps years. He could not afford to delay his march. Keeping the prestige of Ghogharana high, his armies began simply to by-pass Ghoghagadh. This was too much for Ghogharana who was bred up in exalted traditions of warfare. He shouts to his men to open the gates and pursue the moving armies of Mohmud. This was sheer madness. But higher issues were involved in this struggle. Who lives if the temple falls? Who dies if the temple survives the onslaught?—thus argued Ghogharana the great desert sentinel of the temple and formidable bulwark of the Hindu religion and culture. With loud cries of 'Jay Somnath' Ghogharana and his handful of warriors fell upon the running armies of Mohmud. It was a brave rush into the Valley of Death. Ghogharana and his valiant associates lost their lives and won eternal fame. They fell so that their ancestral heritage may be saved. All the women in Ghoghagadh immolated themselves in fire in accordance with the high traditions of the House of Chauhan. In this conflict Mohmud too suffered a heavy loss. but he soon reorganised his armies and continued his march to Somnath Patan.

Samant and Nandidatt in their journey come across the camp of Mohmud. By a clever device Samant is able to see Mohmud. Ravaged by anger Samant attempts to take Mohmud's life but the latter is miraculously saved. With his remarkable presence of mind Mohmud holds the raised hand of Samant and forgives him for such a rash deed. Mohmud is told that Samant is one of the grand-children of Ghogharana Chauhan whose immortal valour is still fresh in his memory. Mohmud is a brave warrior: he frankly admires the high courage and determination of Samant whom he generously gives an escort to go anywhere he likes! Then he turns to his exasperated men saying, "The merciful Allah has given me a new life. He will bless me with success. Come what may, I am resolved to go to Somnath Patan with you if possible or without you if necessary." Soon they responded to his call and there was a spontaneous outburst of joy and determination in all his ranks.

But Ghogharana has become a heroic legend. His fiery message of crusade is being imperceptibly spread. The rousing visions of Ghogharana in terrible earnestness inspiring all to rise as one man to stop the rushing floods of Mohmud's armies are seen in all the border villages of Gujarat. The dead Ghogharana has become a powerful elemental force in rousing the patriotic and religious passions of the people. Samant, the sole survivor of Chuahans, reaches Somanath Patan to acquaint Gangasarvagna with all these tragic happenings.

"Gurudev, none is aware of Mahmud's amazing prowess. Whatever he is, he has great personal charm and magnetism. His fighting skill is rare; his armies are as wide as the sea."

"My son, have you lost faith in the infinite might and mercy of Somnath?"

"My faith is firm and unshakable. But I doubt the wisdom of the strategy of your complacent Kings who have failed to comprehend the nature of the catastrophe. Vakpatiraj, Ghogharana and Balamdev could not withstand the flood. I have seen and moved among Mohmud's armies and assessed their strength. He is another *Tripurasur.*"

Samant impresses on his Gurudev the advisability of evacuating the temple. Gangasarvagna scowls upon such a proposal as he sees in such a move a retreat of his spirit. He firmly announces his determination not to shift the sacred *lingam* and hold fast to his post: he adds that he *alone* if necessary would stand between the *Mlechchha* and the sacred *lingam* and receive the blows! Samant felt helpless to argue with Gangasarvagna, but he suggested that all the armies of Bhimadeva might be brought here and at last an united front could be established in the interest of war. This is accepted on all hands and he is commissioned to approach Bhimadev at Anabilavad Patan forthwith. Before he leaves for Patan he gets an opportunity to meet Ganga and Chaula whose loving sympathies soften his blows.

(iii) Bhimadev's call for the holy war is responded by all the rulers of Kachha, Sorath, Shrimal, Lat and Konkan. They forgot their ancient rivalries, and joined hands with Bhimadev in a novel cause. Daddo Chalukya from Bhragukachchha, Rao Ratnaditya from Junagadh, Kamo Lakhani from Kachcha and Trilochan Parmar from Abu came with their armies in defence of the temple of Somnath. Bhimadev was regarded as the sword-arm of the crusade. Patan became a symbol of the invincibility of religious and cultural freedom. Bhimadev's inspiring call and leadership built up in a short period a living wall of fierce resistance to the invading hordes of Mohmud. He is now eager to meet Mohmud in a forward attack outside his capital. There was difference of opinion among his associates whether they should wage a defensive or offensive war. Bhimadev, as was characteristic of him, favoured an offensive war, but his ministers advised him to be more cautious and practical. At this moment Samant arrives and discloses the purpose of his mission. He was simply fed up with the stupid talks of foolhardiness of those rulers who under-estimated the strength of Mohmud. With an undeniable sincerity he speaks to Bhimadev,

"I am tired to death by hearing foolish futile talks of beating the armies of Mohmud. Those who talk lightly do

not know the incomparably superior strength and organising skill of Mohmud. The enemy is overwhelming in numbers. *Sometimes, I feel that Mohmud is the scourge of Rudra to punish us for our folly and disunity.*"

Samant uttered these words with passionate fervour. To defeat Mohmud is his *only* ambition now. Damodar Mehta supported the wise proposal of Samant to shift the scene from Anahilavad Patan to Somnath Patan. Bhimadev accepts the proposal and orders his armies for immediate exodus to Somnath Patan.

* * *

At Somnath Patan Gangasarvagna left the entire administration of the temple in the hands of Bhimadev who is appointed by him as the Protector of the holy place. The lion-hearted Bhimadev humbly speaks to his Guru, "I am a mere instrument of His Will. A most dreadful enemy is at the door and if He wills, we will finish him off." Again there is a last minute attempt to persuade Gangasarvagna to shift the sacred *lingam* to some other place. But the venerable Rishi is firm in his determination not to displace the sacred *lingam*. With a prophetic earnestness he says,

> "Before the Creation the Lord Shiva manifested His spirit here, and at the moment of the Deluge also the sacred *lingam* will remain here. I will always be with my Lord. Let the *Mlechchha* do his worst. I stand here as a rock."

Bhimadev has quickly organised the defences. Women, children and old persons are sent away to a safe place. Only Ganga and Chaula remain in the colony. Chaula had dedicated herself to Lord Somnath. She thinks that Bhimadev must have been inspired by Him to undertake such a gigantic task. She develops fondness and affection for this mighty warrior. Soon they are blessed with the ennobling spirit of love. Chaula's love puts an edge to the heroism of Bhimadev. The epic struggle begins. Mohmud's mighty armies arrive and take up different positions facing the high-walled castle of the temple. Intoxicated with many victories Mohmud's men are in the best form. Bhimadev and his warriors were inspired by the noblest

traditions of the chivalry of Gujarat to fight a holy war. The organisation of Mohmud's armies was highly efficient, and their mobility wonderful. The green-turbaned and black-bearded Mohmud was in the heart of his armies. Facing him stood on the castle the mighty Bhimadev, the very image of the invincible Parashuram. In a moment there is a hailstorm of sharp and deadly arrows. In the unrelenting struggle Bhimadev performs many deeds of superhuman courage and bravery. All the gates of the castle are heavily protected by the different rulers of Gujarat. Parmar guards the Dwarka Gate at the cost of his life. His death raises the fury of the Rajputs to the highest pitch. Gangasarvagna blesses the dying Parmar and exhorts Bhimadev and others to perform their duty relentlessly. To Chaula the place wore an appearance of Kailas: the fiery Bhimadev embodied the wrath of Rudra: it seemed to her that Lord Rudra had taken arms to kill Tripurasur She saw the retreating Tripurasur and became overwhelmed with the infinite love and mercy of Shiva. When Chaula was in this divine reverie chanting the hymns of Shiva, Bhimadev returned. Chaula in dreamy wakefulness muttered 'Parvati and Parameshvar'.

* * *

Samant and Nandidatt return from Anahilavad Patan. They have brought the astounding stories of the feats of the spirit of Ghogharana in setting the whole country ablaze. In preaching the message of the crusade the spirit of Ghogharana has indeed kindled the hearts and minds of the people and roused them to their depths. Samant tells Bhimadev that Damodar Mehta is pursuing Mohmud, and the invaders will be sandwiched between the armies of Marwar and Ujjayani. This is heartening news and Bhimadev thanks him profusely. "Samant, you are not a mere man. You are an angelic being." "Oh! yes, not a man. Otherwise so much misery must have already killed me!" Samant replies. "Do not utter such words. Verily you are my right hand," Bhimadev gently rebukes him. Samant learns about Bhimadev's affections for Chaula and advises him immediate marriage. Gangasarvagna performs the ceremony and blesses the couple. Shivarashi and others who

looked upon Chaula as an incarnation of Tripurasundari are horrified at the news: they believe that the world will be shattered to pieces by such a profane act and the temple will be destroyed!

On the next day Mohmud's men again came in successive waves to break open the gates, but did not succeed. The treacherous Shivarashi brings through an underground passage a batch of chosen warriors, eleven Hindus and one Muslim, inside the wall. Another renegade, Daddo opens the Junagadh Gate and the floods of Mohmud's armies are immediately rushing inside the castle. Bhimadev realises the foul deceit and makes supreme efforts to stem the ever-rising tide of foes. In a mortal conflict he rose to sublime heights of heroism and received many wounds in his body. All the valiant men under him fought ferociously and died. Their number is legion. Their glory is undying. Their martyrdom is the noblest in the history of Gujarat. They fell so that Gujarat may rise in the splendour of a new awakening. It is a tragic moment in Gangasarvagna's life. His forty years' penance seems to give way and his faith is shaking. But this moment of human weakness passes away and he soon realises the deeper meaning of the mystery of God. He is sad at the thought that Shivarashi, his erstwhile pupil, is the instrument for the fall of the Holy Temple. He sees Rudra in profound rage opened His third eye to envelop the whole place in the fire of destruction! At last Bhimadev falls almost dead. Innumerable wounds are seen on his body and the light of his life seems nearly extinguished. But Gangasarvagna advises Vimal and Samant to remove him to a safe place. He believes that Gujarat will be reborn if Bhimadev survived the crisis.

Mohmud's men are looting and also burning a large part of the city . To realise his long cherished dream of breaking the "idol" Mohmud now enters the temple. It is a grim and ghastly sight. The foolish Shivarashi intervenes to protect the sanctity of the inner temple and offers him a large sum of money and the precious jewels. But the ambitious conqueror sternly replies, "Kaffir! Mohmud is not a dealer in idols He

is the breaker of idols". So saying in contempt he brushes aside the renegade Shivarashi. As he enters the inner temple he is wonderstruck by the dazzling wealth and beauty of the temple. The grand old Gangasarvagna is standing before the sacred *lingam* chanting the eternal hymns of Shiva. In the disintegrating universe only he and his Lord have survived the deluge. When Mohmud asks him to move aside he replies, "Yavan! My Lord Shiva and I are ever together—beyond change, eternal and infinite!" Mohmud is not in a mood to wait further and he impatiently slays the aged Guru. Then with a deep sigh he strikes his club at the sacred *lingam*. The *lingam* of the Lord Somnath which was created before the Creation is thus broken into three pieces!

(iv) The rushing armies of Marwar and Ujjayani are now close upon Mohmud's men. Many warriors having heard of the calamity of Somnath Patan have joined the harassing Hindu armies. To escape their blows Mohmud directs his army to run towards Kachchha. There was a general rout and his men suffered immense hardships and perished on the way.

Bhimadev was taken to Kanthakot for treatment and there he showed hopeful signs of recovery. Chaula was the most tragic figure. She was dazed. Her world had crumbled. Bitter feelings of disillusionment overpowered her. She was taken to Khambhat.

After sometime Vimal brings happy news that the Kings of Bharat have accepted the overlordship of Bhimadev. A new temple is being built in Somnath Patan at the instance of Bhimdev. But Chaula's inner light has gone for ever and nothing can soothe her anguish. Samant too is a weary battered soul. He and his adopted sister, Chaula, belong to the age that had vanished—the age of Gangasarvagna. Chaula gives birth to a son and there is general jubilation. She goes back to Somnath Patan to supervise the construction of the new temple. She has lost all human interests and seems waiting for the call from the Great Beyond. On the fifteenth day of the first half of *Ashvin*, amidst memorable scenes, the new *lingam*

is being installed. The domes of the new temple are again reverberating the exultant cries of 'Jay Somnath'. If Soma, Ravan and Shri Krishna had built the temple in the *Satya*, *Treta* and *Dwapar* respectively, it was the unique fortune of Bhimadev to rebuild it in *Kaliyuga*. Bhimdev had promised to Chaula that she would be permitted to offer her dance to Shiva on this occasion. Chaula's soul is revived. She hears the call of Gangasarvagna and Ganga. She must again be merged in her Lord Somnath. She dances. Her agony is being poured out in painful sobbing rhythms. Lord Somnath is propitiated. Her life's mission is fulfilled. In high ecstasy she drops down on the floor. She is one with Somnath! Bhimadev and other Kings are overawed with this mystifying dance and death. The saddest man, Samant leaves the assembly and sobbing like a child disappears in the all-pervading darkness.

IV

Patanni Prabhuta: 1150 Vikram Era. Karnadev, the King of Patan, is on his death-bed. The atmosphere of the royal palace is reeking with intrigue and power-politics. The Jains who had played a decisive role in the political and social life of Gujarat are busy scheming for a further consolidation of their power and hold on the Royal House of Patan. They have long dreamt of converting the kingdom of Patan into a mighty militant Jain State, and now in the fatal illness of their sovereign they saw the potential fulfilment of that dream. The Rajput chiefs who were brought under the suzerainty of Patan by Prime Minister Munjal are again restless over the aggressive designs of the Jains and are in a mood to measure strength with them in the event of Karnadev's death.

Thirteen years ago Minaldevi, the Princess of Chandravati, attracted by the magnetic personality of Munjal, had travelled all the way to Patan from South to marry Karnadev. Her heart had bowed to Munjal. 'To be near him and be merged in him'—this inscrutable longing had triumphed in her formal marriage with Karnadev. Obviously such a marriage was a failure, but the hand of Munjal restored the relations between

the King and the Queen. Their son Jayadev, the Crown-prince, is too young to take over the reigns of the state.

But Minaldevi is in the making. She is blinded by the lust of power. All these years she had been a puppet Queen and had nourished a dream of weilding unbridled power. Now she feels that the stage can be fruitfully set for this purpose. 'Munjal is the main hurdle. His appeasing policy will lead me nowhere', she argues with herself. At a psychological moment Anandsuri, a Jain *Sadhu* imbued with the passion of spreading Jainism as a State-religion in Gujarat arrives and Minaldevi succumbs to his soft whisperings. Anandsuri is a remarkable person, a sort of miniature Rasputin, whose diplomacy and priestcraft throw magic spell over the Queen. His fanaticism tickles her ambition. He quickly ingratiates himself into her favour and loses no time in sowing seeds of discord and ruin.

Against this background pregnant with conflicts stands the outstanding figure of Munjal as a ballast to the ship of the state. Munjal is not a mere Prime Minister. He—and not Karnadev—is the soul of the kingdom of Patan. He is a Master Builder, in whose genius, wisdom and self-denial the people of Patan have their abiding source of courage and faith. Munjal is the custodian of the honour of Patan. To him power is a sacred trust. Absolute power therefore instead of corrupting him has ennobled him. There is something reassuring in his serenity, introspection and superb dignity that eventually things will not fall apart and the centre will hold them! He is too astute to be taken by the wily Anandsuri and he sizes him up in the very first meeting. But he plays the game and gives Anandsuri a long rope to get entangled in the nets of his craftiness. To oust Munjal from power is the cherished desire of Anandsuri, and the latter fully prepares himself to grapple with the former. If only Minaldevi joins him he will resort to the Machiavellian policy of disruption of the rival groups and unfurl the sacred flag of Lord Mahavir in all Gujarat. Incidentally Minaldevi will thus realise her dream of weilding undiluted power and authority. With these thoughts Anandsuri worms his way to the suspicious, obstinate and ambitious Minaldevi. He hides his

wickedness under his apparent suavity. His fanatical ardour is reminiscent of a Mediaeval Jesuit.

Anandsuri launches himself on this self-ordained mission. "What would you do if you happen to be the Prime Minister of Patan?" Minal asks. "Jainism will be my cardinal policy. I will lead them from victory to victory and hoist the flag of Lord Mahavir in all parts of the country", Anandsuri impressed on her the importance of fanaticism in politics. "How strange. You echo my thoughts. Suppose the Jains prove too powerful and Patan becomes another Chandravati?" Minal questioned. "May be! Queen, there is a way out of it. Remove him", Anandsuri boldly struck. "Who? Munjal? My sole support and strength for these thirteen years?" Minal looked bewildered. "A servant, however loyal, is apt to be conservative. He cannot have the vision of the sovereign. Munjal can be shunted away to Chandravati to deal with the Jains. Shantichandra may be persuaded to be the Protector of Patan." Anandsuri unfolded his game.

* * *

Devaprasad the Chief Satrap comes to pay his last respects to his dying uncle Karnadev. He relates to his son Tribhuvan the tragic story of his marriage with Hansa (a sister of Munjal) and tells him how mysteriously she has been confined all these years by Minaldevi with the help of Munjal in Patan. The young Tribhuvan goes to Munjal on suppliant knees to get his mother back and cries piteously in vain. Munjal's loyalty to his duty demands this sacrifice and he is mighty enough to stand it.

Karnadev dies and with his death the floodgates of disruptive forces are opened. Munjal is in a fix. His constructive leadership desires a peaceful consolidation of people. His high statesmanship looks for an integrated General Will; that way lies the glory of Patan—of Greater Gujarat. For a moment his mind is assailed by distressing thoughts: how he sacrificed his dear wife, son, sister and relations and annihilated all the claims of desires and ambitions for the good of the state. Minal

is striking at the root of his policy. Should he revolt, capture Patan and imprison her?

(ii) The plan conceived by Anandsuri is put through to the wonder and dismay of the people of Patan. The blow is struck against Munjal. Minal has thrown off the tutelage of Munjal. She will be free to be great! All her fine qualities are aroused in action. Although she has changed her political *guru*, in her heart there flows a strong undercurrent of love for Munjal. In fact her outer conflict will derive strength and driving power from this basic emotional fact.

The key-position is held by Shantichandra and Munjal is disposed of to fight the king of Malwa! The plan of arresting Devaprasad in Patan is sabotaged as he escapes and meets Munjal outside Patan. This disturbs Minal, but each obstacle or opposition reveals something fine and heroic in her nature and adds to the rising stature of her personality. "Is Munjal so indispensable?"—she argues with herself and determines to pursue her path with unremitting vigour. Nothing will daunt her. She discovers amazing resources of her mind. Hansa is suddenly released and is tricked into the task of prevailing on her husband (Devaprasad) to hold up his march on Patan! In a fray with Jayadev Hansa's son, Tribhuvan, is wounded and about to be killed by soldiers. Minal declares that his life could be saved only if his mother fulfilled her wish. Hansa agrees. In a dramatic scene drawn with ability and restraint the mother and son meet. But Minal is on the move and is impatient of Hansa's material sentimentality. Hansa obeys. Leaving Tribhuvan to the care of Prasanna she goes out to meet her husband (whom she has not seen for years) as directed by Minal.

Devaprasad is thinking of joining hands with Munjal and then mraching to Patan to settle with Minal. But he has been outwitted and outmanoeuvred by Minal. As arranged, Hansa goes and meets Devaprasad. In a moving scene they meet, and the sudden upsurge of love is flooding them. "What do I care

for the world and its things! Your lap is my world and I have regained it", cries Devaprasad. So the plans of the march are being delayed. Minal thus wins a tactical victory.

Minal, with Anandsuri, has left Patan for Chandravati to obtain full support for her cause. On the way they meet Munjal. Minal is raging with anger and speaks to him harsh and biting words. But the imperturbable Munjal replies, "Forgetting is not my habit. You are moulded and raised to the dignity of the queen by me. Now you seem to have turned into a Fury destined to destroy the House of Solankies! and to me a faithless, heartless, cruel......" In a lofty contempt he throws away his weapons on the ground and becomes a willing prisoner of Minal and Anandsuri. Munjal's inward withdrawal is voluntary, and it appears that Minal has scored another victory.

Patan is without its Lord and the nation's embodied voice is hushed for while. People are indignant at Minal's doings and organize themselves to fight her when she returns. Tribhuvan and Prasanna (whose romance has well advanced) stir them to a sudden flood of mutiny. In the eyes of the people the prestige of Patan is brought to dust by Minal and her aggressive Jain henchman . Tribhuvan, the leader of the revolt, takes a solemn oath that Minal shall never return to Patan as long as he breathes!

(iii) Anandsuri hatches a diabolical plot. In a cold-blooded manner he sets fire to the palace where Devaprasad and Hansa are sleeping. Engulfed in the wild fire they jump into the river below from the terrace. This delights the fanatic Jain *sadhu* who pursues them lest they survive. In a hard struggle the exhausted Devaprasad, with Hansa already dead and kept on one arm, goes down; an end envious even for gods! After life's fitful fever they sleep well! Anandsuri exults in joyous relief, "The enemy of Lord Mahavir has at last gone"!

Distracted by the tragic news of the loss of his parents Tribhuvan steels his heart to avenge their death. The people

of Patan are further enraged at the thought that their queen-mother should be a party to such a heinous crime. It is evident that there can be no peace in Patan if Minal returns.

But Minal is returning to Patan and camping outside the Champaner Gates. Morarpal brings first-hand news of the popular rising and tells her that Tribhuvan is the master of Patan. Minal devises an artful plan to overcome the crisis. She sends for Prasanna and with her consummate art urges her to influence her husband, Tribhuvan, for settlement. Minal plays dexterously upon the whole gamut of emotions in her task of persuading Prasanna. But Prasanna proves too difficult for her. "Send the prince Jayadev with me and you may retire to the banks of the Narmada", Prasanna spoke too plainly to her. In a frenzy of resentment Minal retorts, "Impertinent girl! Remember, Minaldevi *will* enter Patan as the Royal Mother. If not, after me the deluge. Hell to Patan, then!" Realising that Prasanna could not be influenced or used for her ends. Minal returns crest-fallen. She has seen the fiery cross of revolt blazing on the horizon. Her tremendous ego receives a shattering blow. How to retrieve the siutation?—how to regain the lost prestige? Intoxicated by the lust of power she has gone too far in the mad pursuit of her adventure. She has lost Munjal. Was it all worthwhile? In a sense Munjal was the maker of her inner self, and she has wronged him by running away from him. How heavenly it would be if only she could avail of his wisdom, high diplomacy and immeasurable strength? Minal is brooding over her spiritual degradation, and is lost in soul-searing introspection. Sixteen years' rich romantic past is reborn before her mind's eye. Her bleeding heart is now crying for Munjal. The memory of his heroic sacrifices and selflessness is too strong for her to remain on the perch of pride. She mellows. Her battered soul again rises to those heights which once promised her greatness.

Then follows a scene which is the finest thing of art in this book. Munjal comes with the same authentic marks of greatness and gradeur. Minal breaks into a passionate appeal for forgiveness for all that has happened. Her confession is transparent. Her surrender is total. The moments are too sacred to admit of

any conventional strain on her rushing thoughts or natural conduct. "You have been a mirror to the ideals of the people. Today you stand vindicated. I have miserably failed. I realise that the mere possession of power is a vain dream. I am prepared to abdicate everything. I plead only for the crown for my son. Lead me again, O Munjal!", she poured out her heart prayerfully. "I have given up this business of leadership", Munjal spoke sternly. But her regeneration is storming the heart of Munjal whose characteristic magnanimity overpowers him. In a few moments far above the mortal plane both Munjal and Minal stand resplendent in the glory of Love. "I am the same Munjal—unchanged", Munjal's eloquent words filled her heart, and their spontaneous embrace expressed the undying unity of spirits.

Minal is a new woman now. She resolves to live or die for Patan. She rejects the foul philosophy of Anandsuri, who is dismissed from the scene, still nourishing his fantastic dream! Munjal, the embodied voice of the nation, goes to Patan and wins over the wounded patriotic people. Prasanna tells Tribhuvan that his vow is gloriously fulfilled. They marry and dedicate themselves to the greatness of Patan—the new Minal —is the Mother of the State. She will live in it; she will live for it. In his hour of triumph a strange weariness comes over Munjal and as an escape he desires to go on pilgrimage. Minal clings to him and pleads, "My Munjal! no price is too high and no punishment too severe if only we are *together!*" Minal impresses on him that he could not run away from his duty: that Patan will be orphaned if he lay down the reigns of power at such a crucial time. Gujarat needs him and Minal too. Love has welded them together. They have always banished carnal passions and made their love divine. Destiny is beckoning to them. Minal and Munjal will create a new heaven.

A vision of new hope and joy dawns upon Patan. Amidst the thundering cries of *Jay Somnath* Jayadev ascends the throne. Tribhuvan becomes the Lord Protector. It is the task of Munjal to vitalize the country, awaken its will, rouse its energies and inspire its political thinking with a new exalted passion. He is the accredited architect of resurgent Gujarat.

(iv) *Gujaratno Nath*: Four years have passed. The young sovereign is in harness. Thribhuvanpal is consolidating his power in Latdesha, and Udo Mehta in Karnavati and Khambhat. Munjal and Minal were far away on the pilgrimage. The old minister, Shantu Mehta is alone in charge of Patan. Suddenly, Ubak, Commander of Awanti, invades Patan and Shantu Mehta acting on the worldly-wise maxim that discretion is the better part of valour sues for an honourable peace. But before the peace terms are finalised, Kak, a devoted friend of Tribhuvanpal who will play a decisive role in the destiny of Gujarat, appears on the scene. There is a mixed feeling of resentment and complacency in Patan against such an ignominious settlement. Munjal, too, returns and advises the young Jayadev to play the game. Munjal like Lord Krishna in the *Mahabharat*, is the directing and controlling genius of the action throughout this fascinating drama; and Jayadev, his Arjun, at times impatient of restraint, makes a determined effort to live up to the high and exacting goal set before him by Munjal. Munjal's influence is seen on everything. His hand is behind all the vital moves. His comprehension is masterly, judgment unerring and strategy superb. Visibly or invisibly he acts and makes history.

Kak is a Brahmin warrior of Lat. Proud, forthright and fearless, he is the hero of many hair-raising adventures. Nimble and agile, he has a shrewd and vigorous intellect. His hail-fellow-Well met manner and love of fellowship invest him with a charm which is disarming. He plunges into the vortex of the politics of Patan, and advises Jayadev to instruct Tribhuvanpal to stem the invading march of Ra Navaghan of Sorath. To beat off Navaghan is of utmost importance. Jayadev repeats Kak's suggestions to Munjal who admiringly tells him, "Yes, I feel that you have stolen my thoughts." The proud pupil replies, "After all I *am* your pupil!"

Kak meets Munjal and is aghast with wonder at the infinite subtleties of his mind and thought. Munjal tames him and im-

presses on him that a settlement with Malwa would mean the thin end of the wedge and Patan would be a vassal state. Kak is commissioned to proceed to Khambhat which was the stronghold of Jains. Udo who once dreamt of replacing Munjal is the virtual ruler of Khambhat. Having failed in his ambition, Udo kept on feeding the dissenting Jain factions of Khambhat by his subtle fanaticism to serve his political ends. He posed himself as a protector of Jainism and under this guise tried to extend the sphere of his power. As a measure of foresight Munjal had dislodged him from Karnavati and this had hurt the ambitious Udayan. When Kak enters Khambhat he learns of the senseless persecution of non-Jains and Muslims by Jains. Kak has come here to study the situation relating to the fighting strength of the army and its morale in the general set-up of the studied indifference of Udayan. He is a royal guest. He has a nose for adventure. An old man meets him and implores him to intervene in the *Diksha*—the forcible renunciation—of his son. Kak rushes to rescue him but finding the boy in the throes of light gives up his efforts of persuasion. Hardly out of this, he finds himself in another adventure. He learns that a daughter of the famous poet Rudradutt Vachaspati—who had migrated to Patan from Kashmir and had died two years ago —is being coerced to accept a marriage proposal against her will. Her name is Manjari. Her mother wants her to marry Udayan, the Governor of Khambhat. To Manjari who was steeped in Sanskrit literature and its culture, a marriage with a Jain was unthinkable. The very thought of it was nauseating. Manjari argues in a spirited manner with her foolish mother against such an ignoble proposal, but the selfish mother threatens her that she must choose between this marriage and *Diksha!* Kak like a *Deus ex Machina* enters the prison and liberates her. At midnight Kak and Manjari escape to Karnavati. Manjari finds herself in a strange situation. She is highly sensitive and fastidious. Ordinarily she could never think of getting mixed up with such a half-educated boorish man, but the irony of peculiar circumstances has brought them together! Kak seemed to her too crude, coarse, dull and uninspiring. She was in a sense auto-intoxicated; Manjari's fine aesthetic susceptibilities

are repelled by such a gross earthly creature like Kak! Although she owed her liberation to his selfless efforts, she was too proud to condescend to talk much with him as he seemed small and uncultured to her. Manjari is grateful but the seeming cultural differences are too wide and unbridgeable. Her beauty was ravishing. Her learned mind was elevating. It was a unique experience for Kak, and he felt that he was in the seventh heaven. In this mood they reach Karnavati. There he is told that Tribhuvanpal has gone towards Panchal to face Ra Navaghan. He rushes to Panchaleshwar and meets his lord, Tribhuvanpal. In a fierce battle Navaghan is routed and caught alive.

(ii) This resounding victory of the young king of Patan was a counterblast to the fresh settlement with Awanti. Ubak now makes a triumphant entry into Patan and attends the royal court. He has brought a proposal from his master that the royal houses of Patan and Awanti should be united in a marriage of Jayadev and the Princess of Awanti. The people of Patan knew that the settlement with Awanti on Ubak's terms was only a face-saving device and this rankled in every heart.

But nothing was invincible for the astute Chanakya. 'Patan is my child'—he reflects, and on its growth and greatness all the wonderful gifts of his mind and heart are lavishly bestowed. Minal has no separate existence and completely merged into him. Their dynamic spiritual unity has forged a will and weapon which can surmount all obstacles and break any resistance that may come in the path of Jayadev. The very presence of Munjal is a guarantee to the preservation of the State and gives a sense of security to its people. But the young king is straining at the leash and often says, "When shall I become a real king? I am just an ornamental figurehead. The power lies in the hands of Munjal. I am not a free agent. I am possessed with a dream of conquering the whole of Bharat. I want to rule and not merely to reign." He vehemently speaks to his mother, "I am tired of my helplessness.

I want to fly the flag of Patan throughout the country". The fond mother proudly tells him not to be so impatient and to build up his strength. "For that", she asserts, "Munjal is your ideal". Both Munjal and Minal have advised him not to accede to the proposal of Awanti and have tutored him how he should behave in the court when Ubak comes on the next day for his decision.

One of the grand scenes in this book is the delineation of the royal court where an impressive array of Patan's strength is presented to Ubak who is left in no doubt as to the unvulnerability of Patan under Munjal. To his amazement Jayadev rewards the warriors of the battle of Panchaleshwar and pulls up Udo Mehta for having harassed defenceless people, the non-Jains of Khambhat. Kak is elevated to the status of a Bhattaraj. With dignity Jayadev turns to Ubak and gives his decision of non-acceptance of the proposal of marriage with the Princess of Malva. The splendid handling of the court is the first victory of Jayadev which annoys Udo and his companion Kirtidev and delights Munjal who exclaims to Kak, "This boy will certainly out-distance his forefathers, and will be more than a match even for the crafty diplomats!"

In an exquisite interlude Manjari's dreamland and her heroes are revealed. Kashmiradevi—Prasanna of *Patanani Prabhuta* who has risen to high stature in Patan—cajoles her to get married with Kak. Manjari's passions, instincts and dreams are evocative of Anasuya or Panchali who once held the high gods in their hands. Her semi-divine imperiousness is disdainful of average humanity. For her a marriage with a man of clay however brave and good he may be, or to be converted to Jainism is an ugly anti-climax to her idealistic dreams. It is worse than death; it is a spiritual death. She has been wandering in the romantic land of the art of Kalidasa, and his wonderful children of light are her heroes. Human beings who dwell here are pitiable figures devoid of any divine spark. The great Parashuram, 'unconquerable like Kailas and irresistible like fire' who shook and subjected the world to his prowess,

filled her vision. To her Kak was a mere soldier of fortune, uneducated and unrefined. Her pride instinctively rebels against the suggestion of Kashmira who admiringly says, "Manjari, you *are* wonderful". Manjari opens out herself, "Mere bravery does not lead to high status, wealth or excellence in the world".

"Then"?

"Culture and refinement is the first requisite. If the Brahmins lost their cultural distinctiveness and purity, there would be chaos: the world would disintegrate and fall to pieces." Manjari's pride and cultural consciousness burst forth. Poor Kak! In a mood of self-searching examination he admits that despite bravery he is after all a pigmy and lacks profundity. But this is a challenge to his pride and he resolves to rise high in her eyes and be Manjari's hero!

Curiously enough, to escape from the clutches of Udo, Manjari gives consent to her formal marriage with Kak! It is argued that this is only a measure of expediency. As a condition precedent, Manjari takes a promise from Kak that soon after the marriage she should be taken to her grandfather's home. Kak with a heavy heart agreed.

(iii) Kashmira is happy. She has arranged for the secret "marriage" of Kak and Manjari. When the ceremony was over, Kak was sad and the proud Manjari full of anxiety for the uncertain future.

There is an apparent incongruity between Kak and Manjari. Kak is hoping that the marriage would bring them close and dissipate her prejudices. With a soldier's directness he tries to woo her in vain and his embrace is violently repulsed by the infuriated Manjari who tauntingly tells him that his animality has further lowered him in her eyes. Manjari is indignant in denouncing Kak. "The dog follows the bitch", this is how she sums up the loving attempts of Kak. Kak too is enraged at her strange behaviour and, as promised, decides to take her away to Junagadh. But an error in the strategy creates a surprising situation. Before the plan matures Manjari

falls in the hands of her old admirer Udo who removes her to a distant place and keeps her in solitary confinement.

Kirtidev seeks an interview with Munjal. In a powerful appeal to Munjal to give wise lead to Gujarat—and Bharat—in bringing all the monarchs to a common front against the invading barbarous hordes, Kirtidev pleads for a settlement with Malva. Kirtidev unfolds a terrible picture of the coming ruin and desolation of these monarchs if they did not unite to beat off the Muslim armies from the North. To weld them together and to create an united will is an urgent task, and only a great statesman of Munjal's eminence can undertake such a difficult job. But Munjal sees deeper and does not agree with Kirtidev. Shrewdly enough, he reads into such a seemingly noble proposal only a sad story of individual jealousies and rivalries on the part of those monarchs to become a *Chakravarti*—an all powerful emperor—in the end! Kirtidev is adamant, and finding that his mission has failed, utters harsh words to Munjal.

Both Minal and Kashmira have been pressing hard on Munjal for a second marriage, for they find him rapidly aging for want of companionship. Of late Munjal is seen often morose and weary. He is becoming an introvert. There is something which has disturbed the deep layers of his subconscious self. There are moments when Munjal wanders among the ruins of his past—how he loved his wife Fulkunvar and what callousness he showed to her after Minal had entered his life; his only son was sent away in exile; the whole panorama is before his mind's eye and he cries that only death will quench his agony. Minal is distressed at the growing melancholy of Munjal and persists in persuading him for a second marriage. But the wise Munjal abruptly dismisses her request. The finest thing of art and beauty in this book is the midnight scene in which Munjal and Minal thoroughly lay bare their souls and discuss this problem. Minal has roused in her all the courage, tenderness, persuasion, love and compassion that dwelt eternally in the feminine heart, to make a frontal and decisive attack on the unwilling Munjal. She entreats him, "You are like a lone palm tree in a desert. The world and our

self-imposed barriers have always kept me away from you". Minal weeps. Munjal asks her to look at what he calls the credit side of life, and confesses to her,

> "You have inspired me and urged me to attain what was unattainable. You have indwelt me. You have filled my whole being and given me strength and power to my personality. Your love has been woven in every fibre of my being. How can I cut my roots?". "Munjal! For *our* sake you must marry", Minal speaks out her tortured mind.
>
> "Why?"
>
> "So long as you are alone our hearts will retain their stains. Our love will reflect, even obliquely, a sense of sin", Minal explained.
>
> "Sin? It is a dreadful commentary on our noble and irreproachable existence", Munjal feels shocked.
>
> "In spite of our living within the rigid framework of social morality there is sinfulness rooted deep in our love. *Our hearts beat in unison. That ought to be stopped.*" Minal poured out her soul's anguish.

Minal does not want to disown Munjal. She wishes to immolate her heart in the fire of ideal love. Munjal is overwhelmed by Minal's magnanimity, but settles the issue by declaring that to him renunciation is nobler and greater than fulfilment. The sublime unity of Minal and Munjal once again asserts itself. Love, pure and divine, triumphs. The spiritual crisis passes strengthening these wonderful souls.

Kirtidev is arrested at Munjal's instance and brought to the same place where the kidnapped Manjari is kept. Kak is worried and anxious to solve the mystery of Manjari's disappearance. After many hazardous adventures he is able to find Manjari, proud, non-chalant and fascinating as ever. She informs him that Kirtidev is also a co-prisoner there and he too must be rescued! Kak is wonderstruck at Manjari's insistance and goes back to make arrangements for their liberation next day. Meanwhile, Munjal interviews Kirtidev in prison and offers him freedom if he accepted service under Jayadev. This is spurned by the haughty and impetuous Kirtidev. Hot words are exchanged and Munjal blurts out that on the pretext of

fighting the *Yavans* Kirtidev's game is to make Lakshavarma a *Chakravarti.* In a deadly duel Munjal is about to strike a blow at him, but his hand is held back from behind. He turns back and sees Kak. Kak sets free Manjari. Kirtidev discovers the truth that he is Munjal's son! There is a touching re-union of the father and the son. Manjari is in a chastened mood. She has already begun to understand and admire the great qualities of Kak; who now appears worthy of her hand!

(iv) Jayadev has heard much of Ranak the paragon of beauty in Sorath. He is enamoured of her charm and sends Kak to her father with a proposal of his marriage with Ranak. Kak is on this difficult mission and meets Khengar on the way. The old king of Navaghan is on his death-bed and asks his sons to fulfil his last wish of humiliating Jayadev. Khengar alone comes forward and takes a vow before the dying father that he shall fulfil his last wish!

Manjari has come out of the abstract poetic world. Kak's heroism, devotion and love have filled her mind and heart. Her education is complete. Her vanity born of her superior culture has completely vanished. She repents for her studied indifference and harshness to Kak. She realises that it was largely due to Kak's courageous initiative and fighting skill that Udo, Navaghan, Khengar and even Kalbhairav were conquered. Mellow, sweet and gentle, she is eager to surrender her soul to the abounding love of Kak. Kak is aware of this transformation of Manjari. He has understood the language of her heart. Love's hand is upon them, and Kak and Manjari are seen together in a magnificent scene of romantic beauty of the early dawn. Kak and Manjari have entered the region of light, calm, joyous and eternal.

Kak is friendly to Khengar and finds himself in a most awkward situation. Khengar is with Ranak and Jayadev's men are close upon them. Kak knows that Ranak is made of sterner stuff and that she loves Khengar. Ranak tells him that alive or dead she will *always* be with Khengar. In a chival-

rous mood. Kak actually helps them to evade the chasing party. He is placed under arrest and brought to Jayadev whose anger knows no bounds. Jayadev's prestige and honour are at stake. Minal never wanted her son to marry Ranak. Apparently she is pleased at the failure of Kak's mission. Minal and Munjal plan for the invasion of Junagadh. There is a rebellious unrest in Lat, and Tribhuvanpal is asked to go there to quell it. There is a conflict in Kirtidev's mind. He was nurtured in Awanti, and his heart was longing to serve his adopted state. Munjal realises this dilemma and advises his son to return to Awanti! The exodus of Tribhuvanpal, Kirtidev and Kak begins and like a lonely giant tree in a forest stands Munjal, calm, immoveable and massive. Pathos and glory are fused in his isolation.

V

Rajadhiraj. The third part of the trilogy. *Rajadhiraja* contains great scenes, incidents and characters. The action moves on a vast stage. There is a sense of immensity in the atmosphere. Munjal and Minal are the invisible forces and rarely appear in actual conflict. Ravaged by jealousy and enmity, Jayadev declares war on Sorath. It drags on relentlessly for many years. Jayadev conquers large parts of Gujarat but the fort of Junagadh is impregnable. He must storm and subjugate it. His heart is set on Ranak whose beauty has thrown him into Herculean struggles. Kak who is now the Governor of Bhragukaccha is summoned by Jaysinh for advice and help. On his departure, the patriotic rebels of Lata, desirous of throwing off the yoke of Patan, organise themselves in a mutiny. Manjari—the heroic Manjari—builds up the defences to fight the rebels and shows amazing fortitude, resourcefulness and strength. Manjari boldly faces the difficult situation and takes shelter in the fort. There she would remain at any cost.

At long last the battle of Junagadh is over. Khengar dies a glorious death. Jayadev carries away the defiant, exasperated and sorrowful Ranak with a vain hope that she might marry

him. Nothing influences and moves Ranak who is determined to immolate herself on the funeral pyre of Khengar. With vivid realism Munshiji creates a poignant and tragic atmosphere. Jayadev is furious. He thinks that as a fitting climax to his glorious conquest he must marry Ranak. At the psychological moment Kak appears at Wadhwan where Jayadev is camping. As an old friend of Khengar Kak thought it was his duty to protect the honour of Ranak. This was the most difficult and delicate task before him. He firmly entreats his royal master to desist from embarking on such a fatal course, but Jayadev is blind with rage and passion. With the unfailing insight and quickness of a diplomat Kak acts in the higher interests of Gujarat and forcibly detains Jayadev to bring him to his senses in an underground cell. His action is magnificent. The timely arrivel of Munjal, Minal and Liladevi—Jayasinh's queen—saves the situation.

The brave and noble Ranak immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her lord on the banks of the river Bhogava. Kak is told of the desperate situation in Bhragukachchha where Manjari is still holding forth the fort against the rebels. But the sands are fast running out. Sheer starvation takes a heavy toll of life in the fort. Manjari, bewildered and exhausted, crying for Kak, lingers between life and death. She reveals the finest heroic tracts in her character worthy of the wife of a mighty warrior, Kak. Kak arrives too late and is completely unhinged by the heart-rending sight. In the most pathetic circumstances Manjari dies in the arms of Kak. The restraint, realism and the fearlessness of Munshiji's art in depicting the scene of Manjari's death are admirable.

'Remorselessly'—as many readers have criticised him for not having saved the life of Manjari by some familiar device—but truthfully, Munshiji follows his vision. His art unerringly depicts life. He is too great an artist to sacrifice his art for the sake of the so-called "happy ending". The book is rounded off with the triumphal procession of Jayadev, the Supreme Lord of Gujarat, Rajadhiraj, on the first day of Ashad, 1169, Vikram Era, through the streets of Bhragukachchha. Munjal, Kak and crowds of warriors are seen in the procession. Kak is raised

to the Supreme Commandership, and thus Manjari's cherished dream is fulfilled even though she is no more. There is an all-pervading jubilation over the unparalleled victories of Jayasinhdev. The imperial banner is proudly fluttering over the fort and the streets of Bhragukachchha are resounding with the elevating cries of *Jay Somnath.*

VI

Prithvi Vallabha. This is a prose-poem. It is an exquisite piece of art, expressing the rich and refined poetic sensibility of the author. It deals with the last days of the famous Munja, King of Awanti in 1052 Vikram Era. The main interest centres round the two wonderful figures, Munja and Mrinaldevi. Munja is cast in a mighty mould. He is a dweller of the Olympus. In his superabundant vitality, humanity and his Greek attitude to life, we find the quintessence of the Life Force. In a sense, he is a whole man and nothing can destroy his passion for beauty and love of life. Towards the end when the physical bonds of the body are about to be dissolved his mind rises to sublime heights. Mrinaldevi is a powerful psychological study. Her progress from neurosis to health is the progress of the story. In the delineation of her character are seen the author's amazing understanding of the complexity of the feminine heart, his firm and sympathetic handling of decisive moments in the spiritual crisis, and his power to rehabilitate the lost soul. Both Munja and Mrinal are bathed in a halo of beauty.

Prithvi Vallabh is reminiscent of a Greek tragedy. Munja lying chained in a prison reminds us of promotheus chained to the rock. Munja shows the same indomitable fire of spirit, and lives in death. That such a great and fine soul should be put to so much unwarranted pain and suffering by common creatures of the earth is a mysterious fact. There is an oppressive sense of waste of much that is good, noble and beautiful in. Munja. A poignant irony runs through all the scenes where Munja and Tailap are brought together. The transcendent

pathos of the last scene makes us aware of the incongruous and incalculable universe and its strange laws. Munja hurls defiance at all that aims to kill and love. His death proclaims the marvellousness of man and his unconquerable mind. We are fortified by the cathartic feeling that in his death there is an affirmation of the positive values of life. There is no pessimism here. The pettiness, ugliness, triviality and intolerance of the world have vanished, and a flame of spiritual joy shines bright:

> Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
> Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair
> And what may quiet us in a death so noble.

There is a perfect harmony of matter and technique, and the book glows with a brilliance which is the outcome of an intense personal experience. It is sheer poetry and has uplifting power. Voluptuousness enclosed in impassioned utterances of astonishing beauty and force, interplay of colour and music, ecstatic tone and extraordinary energy—these characterise the art in *Prithvi Vallabha.*

(i) 1052 Vikram Era. Munja, the Great, the invincible and the Lord of the earth, has brought by his glorious conquests all the monarchs of his time under his banner. He is the king of kings. He has won both the victories of war and peace. He wields the sword and the pen with an unmatched vigour and in his court at Awanti shines a galaxy of poets, artists and scholars. Munja is a patron of art and culture and from his deeds of extraordinary valour have sprung up many legends. Awanti is the centre of Aryan culture and Munja its finest flower. His sworn-enemy Tailap, the king of Tailangan, who was routed in utter defeat times without number, at last succeeds in defeating Munja with the help of Bhillam, his chief satrap. Munja is taken prisoner and brought to Manyakhet, the capital of Tailangan.

But the real ruler of Tailangan is the 36-year old Mrinaldevi, Tailap's sister. She has brought up and moulded Tailap.

She is the State since it reflects her strange personality. At the age of sixteen she became a widow and thus she denied herself and scrupulously suppressed all the legitimate claims of the senses. She is a frustrated and repressed soul and has, therefore, fostered a deliberate perversity to the art of living. With a masochistic delight she has tried to uproot all the finer instincts of herself and dried up the milk of human kindness in her breast. She has become a frozen woman and her terrifying ego has rendered her a fierce virago. She is constantly waging war against the fundamental instincts and passions of life. With a puritanical fervour she has tried to cast the life of the people of her state in the same pattern. She has gone to the absurd length of closing the theatres and places of amusement in the state. Gaieties and festivities are taboo. Poets, musicians and artists are exiled. A general black-out of mournfulness and gloom descended on the people. Laughter became a crime and joy a sin. Instead of individual freedom and development, Spartan discipline and regimentation were inculcated in the people so that their life became harsh, dry and brutish. Mrinaldevi took to "religion" as an escape and hypocritically began to talk of renunciation!

But her apparent ascetic rigidity is abundantly compensated in her passion for power and authority. She was the presiding goddess of the kingdom of Tailangan, and the defeat of Munja gratified her inordinate pride. The supreme moment in her life has come. She desires that Munja must be humiliated and tortured to death.

* * *

It is a great day. Tailap is making a triumphant entry into his capital. In the glittering procession the royal prisoner majestically walks. He and not his victor has thrilled the hearts of the astonished citizens. There is something invincible in his perfect physique and grand manner; angelic in his sweet and rich personality; it seems an embodied spirit of light, love and joy walks among mortals. He comes, sees and conquers.

their hearts. Lo and behold! Even the stern Mrinal is touched by his hypnotic smile.

Tailap cannot bear this and orders that Munja should immediately be put to death. But Mrinal wants to break his mind and spirit first and body afterwards. As a step to this they decide to put the royal prisoner in a wooden cage.

(ii) The frigid, inhibited and proud Mrinal is shocked to see that Munja is happy even in the prison. His exalted spirit is free and the kingdom of his mind unimpaired. He is singing, laughing and musing over the mysteries of life. She thinks that Munja is shameless and must be punished for his epicurean abandon. She tries to frighten him by threats and to wound him by cruel words. But she has been feeling an indefinable, never-before-experienced sweet sensation in her heart. This rouses her disgust and indignation. She is thoroughly eclipsed by the lustrous personality of Munja. Munja realising this imperceptible change speaks to her, "You came to conquer me, but you are conquered. There can be no greater happiness. Indeed you committed a great blunder." These words penetrated to the core of her being, and she leaves him in a rage cursing him for what she calls his obscene thoughts. But a subtle process of reviviscence of herself begins.

Munja stands in pillory. Citizens are being invited to mock at him, spit on him and stone him to death. By such humiliation even the bravest would break into abject submission. Here was a very different situation. Those who came to tease or spite him became instantaneously his willing bondmen. Such was his all-pervading influence that a mighty wave of exultation seemed passing over their hearts. Munja became a symbol of dispersion of gloom which had heavily set on their lives. Everywhere he radiates joy, music and dancing. The crowd is enamoured of his colourful personality.

> The state of Mrinal's mind was betrayed by her knit brows, her slow and measured steps. But her heart was not as steady as before and her self-confidence had been shaken. Her face looked fierce. The guards and torch-bearers on duty were terrified to see her in this mood. She

had the fate of the whole kingdom in her hands. When the guard of the vault saw her at this unearthly hour, he remained petrified, troubled with wild unexpected forebodings.

The doors of the cell were flung open, and in obedience to her orders, the torch bearer set the torch inside and withdrew.

Mrinal entered and tried to become used to the surrounding darkness.

Munja lay in a corner with his head supported by an arm. He slowly looked up and spoke with sweetness, "Most welcome! I *was* waiting for you".

The words were ordinary, but the tone was so affectionate that the strong armour which Mrinal had buckled on her heart began to fall link by link, piece by piece.

Mrinal: For me?

Prithvi Vallabh still lay reclining on the bare floor "Yes, for you", he said, "I was sure, you could not help coming. Ah! are you well and happy?"

His voice filled the room with a strange fascination. The gay laughter in his eyes could be seen even in the dim light of the torch. With firm resolve Mrinal placed her hands on her waist and concealing her anguish she said, "Munja, Munja, either you are an idiot or you lack the honesty to acknowledge what you understand. I have not come here for a selfish purpose but only to save your soul. I want to set your soul on the path of righteousness—your soul so sunk in sin."

Munja coolly replied, "Mrinalvati, to help others with a view to benefit them is valueless."

In despair Mrinal placed her hand on her forehead and said "How can one do good to others for oneself?"

Munja sat up and quietly asked, "Why for others? I too have done good to others. I too have rescued the poor, made the miserable happy. But it was not done for their benefit. It was done for my own selfish ends. Doing them good made me happy and so I did it. It flattered my vanity. It filled my mind with joy. To make a fuss about doing good to others is only a way of satisfying one's vanity."

"Had she come hither to benefit Munja or merely to satisfy her egoism"—Mrinal asked herself. She felt there was an hitherto unseen truth in the words of Munja. Yet

she boldly replied "This only shows that you are utterly shameless."

Munja said with a smile "May be . . . Tell me, where do you want me to go?"

Mrinal said "on the path of spotless purity".

Munja suddenly raised his head "Spotless purity? Mrinalavati, the impure alone have the need to become pure. What can you teach me? You are the daughter of a king; you were reared in royal comfort and luxury. In your strength you think yourself all-perfect. You are intoxicated with self-righteousness. How can you possibly teach me?" He asked with affectionate solicitude. And then he laughed.

Munja laughed again, "You can't teach me. You can only teach the unhappy and the incomplete. Unhappiness touches me not. I know no imperfection. How will you teach me then? And what more have I to learn?"

"What conceit!" she said contemptuously.

"Call it conceit, if you must. But you don't know the story of my life. I was the abandoned child of a destitute. Today I am the Darling of the Earth (Prithvi Vallabh). Wild lionesses have fed me with their milk. Elephants have fanned the air for me. I have begged in the streets, and given gifts of thrones. I have risked my life for the afflicted and have cut the happy to pieces. I have ravished the beauty of lovely maidens and beheaded girls as beauteous as Laxmi. I have studied the Vedas and walked the way of ascetics, difficult even for the gods. I have composed erotic verses and have indulged in orgies of every kind. What do I want more?" He flung his head back and paused for a reply.

As he spoke his face was enchanting like the evening sky. He gazed intently at her for a while and then said in a friendly tone. "Mrinalvati, in spite of what I have lived through, I am happy. I have known no impurity. What will you teach me?"

Mrinal was speechless. Her throat was parched. Her mind stood still.

"It is you who have to learn many things", he continued, "You do not know the joys fo life. You have yet to learn the secrets of the flowery bed. You have yet to discover the mystery of the dance which enraptures."

Mrinal raised her hand in anger as if to interrupt him. Munja paid no heed but went on.

"And in a lover's arms . . ."

Mrinal grinding her teeth shrieked out 'Villain!'.

Munja laughed. He got up and coming close to Mrinal asked, "You have yet to gather the gems which the ocean of delight, when churned, yields."

Mrinal broke in, her teeth set "Devil! Shameless! You will meet your fate tomorrow". Her eyes were bloodshot. The veins on her forehead stood out in her violent rage. Munja replied smiling "Right! and don't forget, I shall be waiting for you tomorrow evening."

Fuming she asked, "Wait for me?"

"Yes", replied Munja, "You have to be taught all that . . ."

"Rogue! your tongue . . ."

Munja coolly retorted, "My tongue? Oh! it has subdued many a proud and stubborn lady even like you. You have no salvation but to love the 'Earth's Darling' and be loved by him."

In violent rage Mrinal struck Munja full in the face with her hand. He took her arm and drew her close and before she could protest he had planted a kiss on her quivering lips.

Mrinal shrieked as if she had been stung. Her eyes were wide with fear. She stood, trembling, horrified. Prithvi Vallabh stood in front of her, gazing tenderly at her, smiling sweetly.

Mrinal: Guard! Who's there?

Ranamalla came, "Your Majesty!"

"Why were this villain's hands not bound?" Munja added calmly, "Yes, Ranamal, bring your fetters for the hand, so that the fetters of the heart may drop away; otherwise they will stifle me."

Mrinal glared with ferocity like a lioness. Ranamalla and the other guards put fetters on Munja.

"Ranamalla, this sinner has touched my hand. Brand his hand".

The corporal inquired in dismay, "Forthwith?"

Thundering out at the insolence of the query, she asked, 'What'st?"

Ranamalla trembled with fear. He picked up a spear and heated its sharp end in the flames of the torch. Impatiently stamping her foot, Mrinal roared, "Quick! Why such delay?"

"I am ready", said Ranamalla and calling the sentries shouted, "Oh! You! hold his hands".

Munja softly entreated, "Mrinalavati, why this vain effort? Your touch itself has set my poor limbs aflame. There is no need to burn them with fire!"

In answer Mrinal commanded Ranamalla, "Come on! hurry".

The guards tried to hold the shackled hands of Munja but for a long time in spite of his iron fetters, he kept them away.

Biting her lips Mrinal shouted, "Cowards, weaklings! If you don't obey at once I'll have you slain!"

In one last desperate attempt the guards grasped his right hand and kept it straight. Munja was all along laughing at the hard labour which made the sentries pant.

Ranamalla put the red hot spear across Munja's head. Munja did not move a muscle. The repulsive smell of burning flesh spread throughout the prison cell.

When the smell came, she commanded "Enough, stop".

In his usual cool way but a trifle scornfully Munja remarked, "Ah! Is that all? Had I known that you would be pleased with only this much I would gladly have burned my whole hand as I stood."

Mrinal couldn't think of a fitting reply and so she turned to go.

"Mrinalvati, do come tomorrow—to nurse this wound," he said, as she departed with uncertain tread and a heavy heart.

In a paroxysm of rage and contempt Mrinal leaves him. She is now in a mood of self-condemnation. She feels slighted and defeated but is aware of her helplessness. She is in the grip of terrific mental commotion. She is baffled by simultaneous feelings of anger and joy. Her whole being is surcharged with inexpressible and yet irrespressible feelings She is fighting Munja on two planes and it seems to her that she has lost miserably. The combined forces of her royal might and her thirty years' asceticism have proved utterly powerless to bend Munja. On the contrary she has felt a new impulse in the blood which, curiously enough, has begun revivifying her mind and heart.

* * *

Munja is brought to the royal court and is ordered to wash his victor's feet to regain his freedom. This was an

ancient custom which bestowed upon a royal prisoner a choice of saving his life. But it was preposterous to expect Munja, the Great, to grovel in servility at Tailap's feet and to wash them only save his skin. For Munja it was a petty issue whether he lived or died. He had conquered both life and death. Naturally he ridicules this offer and contemptuously kicks away the jug. Ravaged by discomfiture and in cowardly anger, Tailap draws his sword to kill Munja at the very moment. Surprisingly enough, Mrinal intervenes and exhorts her brother not to kill a defenceless prisoner in this way as it was against all the canons of Arya Dharma. Tailap relents.

* * *

Mrinal is in sweet delirium, as if her being is lit up with some unearthly light. She is tremendously restless and experiences the pangs of reawakening. She is in the pain and fever of passion. Surreptitiously she goes to Munja and in ecstasy confesses to Munja, "I came to capture you—but I myself am captured". She has a gratifying feeling that her long penance is rewarded by this self-realisation. How long this blissful dream would last? After all, Munja is a prisoner there. People are bound to suspect her long visit to the prison. She cannot continue such a deceptive role much longer. To save Munja's life is not easy, and it is impossible to live without him. Mrinal is in a dilemma. Munja suggests a remedy that he would kill Tailap first and then take her off to Awanti. Mrinal exclaims "O Lord of the Earth, I am dazed and possessed. But I cannot be a party to the murder of my brother. Let us escape to Awanti."

Running parallel to the main plot there is a sub-plot relating to the fall and rise of Bhillam who, having lost the kingdom of the Syundesh on account of his defeat at the hands of Tailap, has accepted the place of the Chief Satrap in Tailangan. Bhillam and his brave wife Laxmidevi are passing their days in sheer dejection at Manyakhet. It was Bhillam who was mainly responsible for the capture of Munja. Bhillam and Laxmi are awaiting the day of their deliverance which would only come when their daughter Vilas is married to Tailap's son Satyashraya. It was presumed that after this marriage Bhillam

would return to his land and regain his kingdom. Both the Crown-Prince Satyashraya and Vilas are being educated on too correct lines under the strict surveillance of Mrinaldevi! Their bloodless wooing is a delightful parody of youthful love.

* * *

With Munja, there came poets too, as prisoners. They are however released on Bhillam's intervention but are detained in his castle for some time. One of the poets, Rasanidhi—who eventually is recognised as Bhoj of Awanti—comes in contact with Vilas and holds daily discussions with her on literature, life and art. Sensitive, refined and fastidious, Rasanidhi is in a nostalgic mood. The adolescent mind of Vilas develops kindly feelings for such a man in the moon. His discourses are opening new vistas in Vilas' mind. Unconsciously her mind begins to feel that in contrast to Rasanidhi how crude and dull Satyashraya is; how foolish is all this talk of Mrinal on religion and how absurd it is to kill the natural instincts of joy in life.

With the help of Laxmidevi the poet-prisoners make a plan of meeting Munja at night in the prison and of persuading him to escape to Awanti. Rasanidhi leads the party, and they succeed in getting into the prison by an underground passage. In tense moments Rasanidhi requests Munja to agree to the plan in the interests of the people of Awanti. Munja laughs and reveals the sublime secret of his new love! Bhoj and others are baffled. Munja, then, asks them to come the next day so that Mrinal too can go with them. The party returns. "Is he a man?"—asks Bhoj while returning. "No, he is a god", replies his companion, Dhananjaya.

* * *

Mrinal makes a psychological mistake. She is in a devastating mental conflict—should she run away with Munja or devise some means of keeping him for all time in Manyakhet. At last she thinks that a way out is found. She calls Satyashraya and tells him all about the plot of the poets. She tells him that the plot must be nipped in the bud with a proviso that no harm or injury should come to Munja in the event of any scuffle. As arranged, Bhoj and party meet Munja at night in the prison. Their plan is foiled. In a powerful melodrama Satyashraya

attacks Bhoj. A violent duel follows. Bhoj overpowers him but loses Vilas. Satyashraya sees Vilas on the way and while returning cuts off her head. Tailap comes to know of these secret meetings of Mrinal and Munja and their growing love. Filled with wild loathing he rudely upbraids his sister for what he calls her disgraceful fall.

Then follows the final break-up. Bhillam and Laxmi in sorrow and anger leave Manyakhet for their country. They have renounced the overlordship of Tailap.

(iii) Inexorably the story moves to its sombre end. The final scene is awe-inspiring and majestic. Its pathos is sublime. Tailap has proclaimed in the city that Munja shall beg from door to door for seven days and then be put to death. Munja in chains walks in the streets of Manyakhet with a beggar's bowl. Nothing has diminished the lustre and grandeur of his spirit. Nothing has disturbed the poise and equanimity of his wonderful mind. With royal ease he moves about diffusing light and joy amidst the admiring crowds. Free from fear or rancour and supremely indifferent to the terrible fate that awaits him —to be crushed under the foot of an elephant—Munja cracks jokes with them. Tailap sardonically laughs being happy with the thought that within a few moments his bitterest enemy would be tortured to death. Poor Mrinal is in agony. With the unfailing tenderness of a fond lover, Munja sustains her.

> Without hesitating, without being asked, he came up straight to the place where Mrinal stood and smiled. His smile was as fascinating as ever.
>
> "How are you Mrinalvati?" The longing of a man who had met his beloved after ages was in his voice. Mrinal could not smile in reply at once but the magic of his smile and voice was on her. She smiled, sweetly, slowly, with a face overshadowed with grief. Her eyes were brimming with tears. Their glances met as if in an embrace. Everyone, as he looked on, caught his breath, "What can you give me now?" The Lord of the Earth asked with the tenderness of a fond lover. "You have given me all that you ever had."
>
> These words had a maddening effect on Mrinal. A wild gale of passion swept over her. She forgot her misery,

the occasion, the place and looked at her lover with eyes full of love.

"Beautiful one, do not be afraid. The world is both wicked and stupid and will always remain so. You have made your life beautiful. Let the world say what it likes".

Mrinal forgot all herself, the presence of Tailapa and the spectators, even her modesty. She threw away the pot in which she held the alms she had given him and fell at the fettered feet of Munja. "Forgive me, my lord, Prithvi Vallabh, I have proved your murderer." Mrinal placed the dust from off Munja's feet on her head.

"You? My death was predetermined at the very moment of my birth. What can you do?"

Tailapa sprang down from the platform on which he stood and dragged Mrinal away. The citizens and the soldiers stood with tears in their eyes.

"Tailapa, what's the use of making this poor woman a victim of your wrath against me?"

"Be quiet, low-born!"

"Why should I?" Munja asked with a smile. It is for you to keep your mouth closed for the hour of your triumph is at an end." Mute with rage, Tailapa could not speak a word.

Munja, his face glowing with power, looked round, smiled and said loudly: "Fool! Can't you see? My Bhoj, bold as a lion, now occupies my throne at Avanti? In Syun Desha Bhilamma, your feudatory, no longer longs to take my revenge. Your sister and your subjects, they are not yours but mine. Whose has been the triumph, mine or yours?"

"This elephant of mine will just show who has triumphed", said Tailapa. And leaving Mrinal on the platform, he came forward.

Munja laughed aloud, "Will it be your triumph?" You wanted to bend me to your will, but I will die unyielding as ever. You prided yourself on your morals and you will have committed the heinous sin of killing a king. Who is the conqueror, you or I?" Munja's resounding voice, full of contempt, could be heard by the whole crowd.

In excitement Tailapa bit his lip. His eyes flashed with venom. "Soldiers, take him there."

"Why" asked Munja, "I am going there myself,"

saying so, he stepped towards the elephant with lordly dignity. All eyes were fixed on him. Every one held his breath. Munja coolly walked in front; Tailapa and a few soldiers followed.

He came and stood near the elephant for a while. Under Tailapa's orders his fetters were removed. Unfettered, Munja stood erect. He removed the locks which overhung his forehead and turned his majestic face towards the people and Mrinal. His eyes were fearless, flashing irresistible power. A smile full of sweetness and of dignity played upon his lips. The people shuddered. Some men and women began to sob. Mrinal looked on as one out of her senses. The soldiers with faces set hard went on mechanically performing their duty.

"Tailapa", said Munja quietly, "Just see the stage is fittingly set for a Prithvi Vallabh."

As Tailapa stood with lips pressed, his heart full of cruelty, despair stole into his heart. He began to feel that even in the very moment of his death, Munja stood victorious. He waited for one more chance to find for Munja's self-confidence to shake. "Come along, or shall I call my men?" he cried.

Munja looked with contempt at Tailapa and stepped near the trunk of the elephant. There he stopped, as if in hesitation. Tailapa got the moment he waited for.

"Are you frightened?"

"The earth will crash down when its Lord begins to fear. Fool! I was only thinking . . ."

"Of what?"

"Only this," Munja replied, looking up with pride; and his eyes were full of longing. "I was only thinking of poor Saraswati (goddess of learning). Laxmi (goddess of wealth) will now go to Vishnu. Victory will repair to Kartikeya's house (God of War). But when Munja will go, Saraswati alone will not know to whom to go," saying this, he turned his back on Tailapa with inexpressible contempt, and addressed the elephant thus. "First among elephants! Prithvi Vallabh, the first among kings has now come to you". The elephant stood as if in deep thought, then playfully waved its trunk, Munja softly rubbing it all the time. Ultimately, with perfect composure, he clung to the trunk and the driver pricked it with the goad; and the elephant twining its trunk round Munja lifted him off the ground.

The elephant lifted its trunk, lowered it again and again. The people with tears in their eyes saw in its embrace Prithvi Vallabh smiling, his brilliant eyes flashing with pride, like Shri Krishna triumphantly standing amongst the coils of serpent Kali.

The elephant snorted and gave one swift swing to his trunk. And Munja's cry resounding in the air with triumph *Jai Mahakala.*

The crowd stood horror struck. Mrinalvati's piteous shrieks rang out, piercing the heavens.

Munja for a moment disappeared under the foot of the elephant. The animal put its foot on him, pressed it; a crack was heard;—the foot was lifted.

On the ground, the corpse of Prithvi Vallabh lay crushed and flattened.

Thus closes this great work—with a mighty crash and a heart-rending pang. No wonder that though short, this most typical of Munshiji's historical romances, had the fortune of being translated into many languages, and of being staged and screened with resounding success.

5

Social Plays and Novels

As in the West, so in the East, progressive ideas have spread through the agency of literature. Society is conditioned by customs and conventions which taboo radical departure from the *status quo*. But against these galling restrictions voices are raised in protest and soon a chorus of such voices brings nearer, if it does not bring about their removal. This iconoclastic trend in English fiction came into prominence in the seventeenth century when Fielding exposed hypocrisy and vice in his novels; Dickens, a century later, furthered the task and suggested reforms. But in the realm of the Drama, it was left to Ibsen to point the accusing finger. His stand was applauded by Shaw and, among other things that appaered then, the New Emancipated Woman made her *debut* on the stage.

In a similar way, it was not till the days when Munshiji took up his pen to write social plays that certain prohibitions met their Waterloo. In a jovial, critical, mocking vein he faced the hitherto ignored topics and showed either their absurdity or their mal-effects. Some of his plays, he admits, might shock the traditionalists, the purists, the serious, as he happens to have adopted an "unconventional" attitude towards certain accepted things. For instance, in his *Brahmacharyashrama*, (1931), which he calls a farce, he seems to be ridiculing the whole ideology of continence, on practical grounds. The play, by itself, is delightful to read and has an aura of realism behind it. It was written while the author was in the Yeravada Central Prison and the opening scene gives a good picture of jail life.

Dr. Madhubhai has discovered a panacea that would "make gods of men", and he is in search of recruits. Among his

fellow-prisoners he finds men from the learned professions, business magnates, and at last, succeeds in winning them over to his side. They decide to open a Continence Home on the banks of the Reva, after their release, and dedicate their lives to its service. It is easy, the doctor explains, to take and follow the vow of continence, and to forget even the existence of women. Time passes; and then we see them all at the Ashrama, none the worse for their vow. Their enthusiasm is whipped up, now and again by Dr. Madhubhai and things go exceedingly well till the cook, Daji, reports ill-health and sends his neice, Pemli, in his stead. Her presence shakes the resolve of the inmates and quarrels ensue. In the end, almost all leave the Ashrama and their vow, and Madhubhai falls in love with Pemli, the village damsel, to the amazement of the last inmates. The arguments advanced by the different residents of the Home for inviting Pemli to cook for them, the reasons given to explain their acts of service to her, are indeed charming and very humorous as also are the scenes when people turn up at inconvenient moments. Pemli, with her rural dialect and shrewd insight, is well drawn. Her sense of honour and rectitude is shown to be higher than that of some of the inmates themselves, though she is just a country bumpkin at the outset and has taken no vow.

Another equally humorous play, 'The Afflicted Professor' —*Pidagrasta Professor,* (1933),—touches on the theme of the relations between Professor and pupil and of how things might go out of hand unless moral character is kept strong and unalloyed. Mohini and Vasumati are impressed by the personality and appearance of Prof. Pritamlal and the latter lady thinks more of him than of her braggart-husband Shamsher Bahadur Jorawarsinh. They are all invited to a house-party at the unwitting Tribhovandas's residence at Chinchan Tarapore and here his friends, disguised as robbers, raid the house at night. The boastful, cowardly Jorawarsinh is exposed and his wife, Vasumati, feels ashamed of him, particularly when she sees Pritamlal rise to the occasion and defend the house. She decides to elope with him and preparations are set on foot. Fortunately, Jorawarsinh happens to get scent of it in time to

speak to his wife and she listens to the voice of conscience and leaves Bombay in the company of her husband. Soon after, Pritamlal comes to fetch her and is at first both elated and surprised to learn that Vasumati has left a message for him. "For me?" he asks, eagerly, breathlessly. "What is that?" "Good Bye", comes the crushing answer.

The exposure of Jorawarsinh at the country house, the just shock that Pritamlal receives at the end, are a few of the highlights of the comedy. The attitude of College students towards their Professors, and picnics, is well shown. Mrs. Pritamlal is a good rendering of an invalid shrew.

In *Kakani Shashi*, (1929) the theme is more grave. The problem here is the status of women and the play touches on the Women's Emancipation movement—though, of course, with characteristic mockery. Shashikala, a young graduate, lives with her guardian who, she is led to believe, is her uncle. On her attaining maturity she is to inherit her ancestral propeity and to live as an independent entity, away from her 'uncle' Manharlal. Later, she comes to know in a touching scene who she is, who he is, how they met and why he did not reveal his identity. She is thereupon overcome with love for him and sees that it is hardly possible for women to live all by themselves despite their protestations to the contrary. Her resolves melt into thin air, as did those of the inmates of Continence Home mentioned above.

This is one of the best plays of Munshiji. In language, characterisation, plot and action, he has very ably fulfilled his task. The humour and satire are subdued and are found in appropriate places. The depiction of Shashikala, an embodiment of the New Woman, is pleasant. One sees that behind her modern attitude and new-fangled ideas, there is a human heart beating. Like the Shavian new woman, she is intelligent, energetic, witty. Like her, too, she knows what she wants and how to get it. The other characters that go to make up the *dramatis personae* receive good attention at the hands of their creator.

In *Samajik Natako*, which comprises three plays, the author deals with social evils. In the first of these, "*Vavashethnun Svatantrya* (or 'The Independence of Vavasheth'), we see the

henpecked Vavasheth make a bid for liberty (after the fashion of Belgium during the World War I) from the iron domination of the shrewish wife, Reva. He meets a young lady and indulges in the first flush of new-found liberty in practical jokes with her on the Churchgate Sands, in a manner unbecoming his age and dignity. Later, he finds that this young lady is no other than Radha, his son's beloved and daughter of the insolvent Damodar Desai. He even contemplates marriage with her and holds the 'threat' of this marriage over his tyrant-wife, Reva, and thus brings her to submission. Eventually, Mangal, the son, and Radha are happily united.

In this and the other two plays of this volume certain signs suggest that it is one of the early writings of the author. Certain scenes of this play, and of *Be Kharab Jana,* which follows, seem to be difficult of representation on the stage. The dialogue, besides, does not seem to have the same sparkle as it has later—though this may have been done deliberately to stress the "level" of the characters like Reva.

Agnankita, (The Obedient) is a scathing satire against many social evils and false sense of duty. That kind of life where young women are married off for money to men decrepit, feeble, old and diseased, in flagrant violation of their own reasonable and declared wishes; where these husbands are eager and willing to enter the bonds of matrimony for the fifth time; where morality is conspicuous sadly by its glaring absence; where a nephew, out of a falsely conceived sense of rectitude and duty, is prepared to give up his betrothed and accept her as his aunt, where a husband accepts and expects forced worship from his wife, where to please a dying uncle a nephew is prepared to call persons from disreputable quarters against his own better judgment—this kind of life receives a blow from which it would be difficult to escape unshaken.

Dhirajlal, an over-dutiful and convention-abiding nephew, sacrifices Savita, his betrothed, on the altar of so-called duty, and marries her sister, Kamali, who laughs at his ante-deluvian notions. Savita is 'sold' to the oft-wedded Harkisondas who dies later leaving her a girl-widow. Both she and her sister rebel against their helpless lot, but to no great avail. People

in the habit of spending money in indiscriminate or wasteful charity receive their proper need of satire in this drama.

The play is a sad commentary and a bitter and cynical one on the sorry spectacle of life as it exists. The author, in a note at the opening of the play. reminds us that so long as this state of society is in being, these plays have an important function to fulfil. Realism demands these plays. Dhirajlal, in the play, becomes a by-word for ill-conceived and false "obedience" which does more harm than it can cure. One may even feel that what Dhirajlal suffers from is not so much a duty-complex as a fear-complex.

Happily for the reader, the third play is again a delightful, though possibly, a fantastic comedy. *Two Bad Persons*, shows us the hot stuff that the modern generation can become. Here Rambha is shown as a go-getter and not as a meek submissive woman who bows to her unhappy lot. She loves a newly qualified doctor, Mohan, a dashing, gay, irresponsible, debonair young man, and declines to fall for riches or position when it is presented to her in the shape of an England-returned suitor, Ramdas Dagliwala. The time-worn devices of escapades and diguises break down' timely departures, tom-foolery helps to keep the action lively. Though the longest of the plays in the book, its action or dialogue does not flag or falter. Humorous situations are plentiful though not all of the same level. Rambha is being driven by her father to the marriage pandal but near Worli, the car breaks down giving the distressed damsel the opportunity of a lifetime. She seizes it with both hands and happens to meet Dr. Mohan. Eventually, Parshottamdas Popda, the father, drives away, innocent of his daughter's escape, and arrives late and without the eagerly-sought-after bride, Rambha. The marriage has to be postponed and distinguished guests turned away. Rambha is later retaken and she informs press editors that she is to be 'married' to Dr. Mohan. This news is front-paged and creates a sensation all over the town. In spite of denials and contradictions, people, including the disappointed, foiled, one-time bridegroom, Ramdas, believe the news item to be correct; he is told by Rambha that marriage with her now would tantamount to bigamy for which heavy

punishment is reserved. He thereupon departs crest-fallen and Rambha has her way.

The complications may seem impossible, the behaviour of some characters, including those of Rambha and Mohan, may appear "shocking", but the play, as a whole, remains interesting from the time the curtain goes up for Scene I, till it is rung down on the second and last scenes of Act III.

From the above it is clear that humour is a strong point with Munshiji; and that he has used it in a variety of charming ways—making it gay, satirical, gentle, as occasion requires. Literature has always been the reflection of life, and the society these plays touch on, shows both the old order and the new. The reforms suggested are a sign of the pains the author has taken to study life, its happiness and misery, crying needs of the hour like the reform in the marriage-system, and woman's status in the present age, are dealt with boldly. In order to stress his point, he sometimes resorts to exaggeration and possibly, ditortion, but these are not too glaring. As has been pointed out by some critics, in his plays he has left the old and beaten paths of Gujarati drama—the practice of always having Acts and scenes; songs are seldom used. In this it resembles more the one-act plays of today than the traditional dramas of old. The dialogue is racy and homely and situations such as would be met with in life. The social "revolt", of the younger generation against what it considers evil and repellent, is the burden of some of his plays as also is the motif. The villain is more the social evil represented though the agency of men, than any particular human trait or frailty. In this, the plays resemble, distantly, the Moralities of the West, where the audience witnessed a struggle between Good and Evil.

The women characters seem to possess more of the *esprit de vivre* than the male characters and are gifted with more energy, loquacity and sense. They are not the shy, retiring, meek sort, but (mostly) educated people, with a will and a wish of their own. They seem to be faithful observers of the *Sanjivani Mantra* and know no submission to tyranny or wrong. The substance of the commandment—"This above all, to thine own self be true"—is rarely lost sight of by them. They are

even prepared to fight to the last in defence of their convictions, to lose their happiness in their attainment.

That grandeur of conception and finesse of execution which are present in his 'Pauranic' plays or historical novels is sadly missed—possibly because the author felt them to be foreign to his purpose and ill-suited to light social plays. The level of the plays would have risen still higher by the omission or alteration of certain scenes of doubtful value.

In the end, speaking by and large, we might say that Munshiji has told the people some harsh truths rather than soft falsehoods, for their own ultimate advantage. In doing this, he has salted his suggestions and satire with naive humour and pathos and has given the Gujarati-speaking world a bulk of drama which it has reason to remember with pride.

II

THE SOCIAL NOVELS

Mr. W. Somerset Maugham once said that a good novel should possess "a coherent and plausible story, a variety of probable incidents, characters that are living and freshly observed, and natural dialogue. It should be written in a style suitable to the subject. If the novelist can do that, and it's a lot, I think he has done all that should be asked of him". If this criterion be applied to the novels of Munshiji they would successfully stand the test, and be regarded as the best in their kind.

It is natural for a writer to remember his own life and person when constructing the plots of his novels. In this sense every novel may be said to be in part the autobiography of the author himself. In *David Copperfield,* Dickens refers to his own early days; and we can know something quite substantial about H. G. Wells' life from *Love and Mr. Lewisham.*

Thus it is with Munshiji's *Verni Vasulat* (1919)—the first of his four social novels. We are told in the opening pages of the book that it owes its existence to certain sights and feelings that the author saw and felt, and to the desire to give clarity and concreteness to certain striking personalities he had known

It is written in three parts and covers a wide range of matter. The author has that love for this book which a parent has for his first born. Under the title of *Revenge is Mine* it appeared in English a few years after the Gujarati edition was out, thus indicating the appeal that it made to its numerous readers.

The novel follows to a certain extent the old and beaten path of Gujarati fiction. For a time, the story veers round the intrigues in the State of Ratnagarh; describes the domestic life and customs of Hindu families, mentions the life and work of sadhus. But in other respects the story blazes a new track.

Jagatkishore lives with his widowed mother Gunvanti at the house of his late father's friend Raghubhai. One night he finds himself suddenly removed from there and though he is not told the real cause of this precipitate departure—which is the immoral designs Raghubhai has on Gunvanti—his young mind instinctively learns enough to cultivate an undying dislike and hatred for him. This feeling of animosity becomes all the more bitter and deeply rooted when he sees the same Raghubhai, many years later, standing alone in the death chamber of his mother, appearing to gloat over her death. He vows revenge on him, though of the real cause of the bitterness, he is still not precisely aware.

In the meantime, he has loved and lost Tanman, an acquaintance of his boyhood days to whom he had plighted his word. She has been forcibly and under the most harrowing and tragic circumstances married to Sheth Karamdas Tribhovandas, a man of vile character. The cruel machinations of her step-mother Gulabbai and the rush-tactics of her assistant Shyamdas consummate the event.

Tanman is brought to Bombay to lead her unhappy life, cut off from all refined society and company, except what she can get from Rama, daughter of her tenant Raghubhai, who has also come to Bombay after finding his plans for the Dewanship of Ratnagarh foiled beyond repair. Rama remains true to Tanman to her dying day which comes soon after. In fact, she has been the only confidant of Tanman in her last days.

Jagatkishore, after he has sustained the loss of the only two people he cared for most,—his mother and Tanman—har-

bours thought of suicide. He is saved therefrom by Anantanand, a swami of the Math at Varat, and from that day onward, Jagatkishore bends his energies to the task of putting the ashram on a surer foundation. He experiences spiritual rebirth and assumes a new name, Siddhanath. In the course of his activities on behalf of the Math he finds himself confronted with Raghubhai who is scheming with other to wreck the institution as also the state of Ratnagarh. Thus he finds that the interests of the ashram as well as his own, lie in the uprooting of Raghubhai or in causing him to come to grief. To achieve this end he comes to Bombay, cultivates "friendship" with him, and, Raghubhai, hoping that he might marry his daughter Rama, encourages him to meet her. Jagatkishore evinces no objection to this as he wants Raghubhai to sustain a severe shock by refusing later to marry Rama, after leading him to expect that he would. He felt that to break the heart of an innocent girl, Rama, to torture her father was just retribution for what his mother had been made to suffer at his hands. But Raghubhai was made of sterner stuff, cast in a different mould. So self-centred was he that Jagatkishore's refusal broke the heart not of Raghubhai but of the innocent and trusting Rama.

In the meantime, to state the incidents briefly, a murder has been committed and Anantanand who happens to arrive on the scene just after, sees Jagatkishore runnnig away. He presumes from this circumstantial evidence that Jagatkishore must certainly be the culprit, that in the haste for revenge, he must have done the foul deed. To save him and the institution, he takes the whole blame upon himself, unaware of the fact that the real culprit is not he, Jagatkishore at all, but Gulabba, Tanman's step-mother. When Jagatkishore sees Anantanand after this act of altruism and for the last time, he is asked by the Swami to get married and to forget all thoughts of revenge. In very noble language he tells his pupil that Revenge comes of its own accord, that there is no vital difference between making others unhappy and being so ourselves,—they are, he reminds him, two halves of a single whole, mutual complements of each other.

With Prospero in *The Tempest,* Jagatkishore might have said: "Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick, Yet with my noble reason 'gainst my fury, Do I take part. The rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance"—so completely is he altered for the better by the parting words of Swami Anantanand. He acts on his advice and finally brings sunshine back into Rama's life by making her his wife.

Grim and tragic are the incidents that accompany the forced marriage of Tanman with Karamdas. At the time when her father is either just dead or dying of a paralytic stroke brought on by the agony to which he is subjected by his wife, Gulabba, the daughter is wedded (to the accompaniment of music), to a libertine. The strain is too great for her to bear, her fragile body and sensitive mind, weakened by continuous and systematic torture is unequal to the task; she who has dedicated her soul to Jagat, she who has been dragged from her loving though ineffectual father's death-bed, faints in the marriage pandal. Equally poignant is the remembrance of the few years she spends at the house of her husband. The maelstrom of passions which holds the minds of Jagatkishore within its grip infuse into us deep sympathy for the hero and we share his feeling for revenge, in spite of ourselves. We hold him in greater respect when after meeting Anantanand he undergoes a spiritual reincarnation and issues therefrom as Siddhanath.

The comparatively minor characters like the wicked Gulab and the disreputable Shyamdas, the ignoble Raghubhai and the licentious Karamdas get their desert in the end. The grim, almost forbidding, poignancy of the novel is relieved by such incidents as the description of the good work done by the Math at Varat, under the direction of Swami Anantanand. This model village is a veritable utopia where free and compulsory education is given to all from the rudiments of language to the College stage; attention is bestowed here both on the mind and the body of the student and he or she is taught to be self-reliant. Anantanand here shows to the world how

money should be spent. He has heightened, he has glorified, he has ennobled his people and his surroundings.

In another of his novels, *Kono Vank?* —Whose Fault? (1924), Munshiji bitterly exposes those social evils and vices which were only casually touched on in *Verni Vasulat*—such as the plight of widows in society, forced marriages, caste restrictions. Here he pours righteous indignation on these and similar social anathemas. The title itself (Whose Fault?) is very significant. Many have to suffer and suffer greatly and grievously—and for all this whose is the responsibility, the author pertinently asks? So sincerely does the author believe in the justice of his cause that he decided not to revise the plot or alter it ever so slightly when it was to be published in book form after it had gained popularity as a serial publication. His spirit is roused to a furious pitch when he witnesses the evils of society. In the preface he tells us: "So long as the foundation of society rests on women's helplessness and dependence and misery, so long as we cannot face the question of marriage squarely and in a natural way, so long as manhood is considered to lie in the maintenance of orthodox and time-worn conventions, even at the cost of self-development, so long as society takes pride in crushing rather than raising the pure and moral sentiments of the human heart—these stories will not be considered improper or out of place."

Within the comparatively small compass of a prologue, an epilogue and some few hundred pages which comprise the four parts of the book, the author very successfully paints before us the character of two major victims of social cruelty and orthodoxy, if not injustice. Though the novel is as grim and forbidding as *Verni Vasulat,* indeed, in some places even more so, still it is relieved in part by flashes of mocking humour which brings much needed relief to the overworked sentiments of the readers.

Briefly told, the story deals with the life and character of Mani who found herself a widow at the tender age of eight, and a month after her marriage. Some time later, she is sent to slave for her deceased husband's people and here she has to work harder than even a factory hand, without one smile of favour,

one word of encouragement or one act of assistance. Driven to despair, she takes the plunge and we see her later in the company of her illegitimate daughter, Surekha. She goes from place to place and suffers from the cruelty of man-made laws and taboos, being a plaything in the hands of unscrupulous people, including women of ill-repute like Tungabhadra and a supposed yogi. She escapes from these toils and finds some temporary shelter in the garret of the young law-student, Muchkund. He offers to help her and proposes marriage. But his father and society would not hear of it and he is reduced to submission and forced to marry an illiterate, quarrelsome spiteful country cousin in the person of Kashi, who makes his life unhappy and leaves him when he is seriously ill. Suffering pain, personal hardship and insults, even the death of her only and dearly loved daughter Surekha, Mani works on and finally saves Muchkund from an otherwise certain death. She spends her mental and physical resources, her small and precarious income comes very near selling her honour, and finally loses her child to save the life of him who had helped her in her hour of need. Such gratitude, such sacrifice, such self-effacement, such undivided loyalty is rare, and Mani rises infinitely in our esteem. She counsels Muchkund to stay with his wedded wife Kashi and does not give any countenance to alternative suggestions put forward by Muchkund. It is only after Kashi dies some years later, that Mani marries Muchkund and gets the reward which her ungrudging services so richly deserved.

All through the story the undercurrent of social evils is very strong. The tragedy of Mani's life becomes the gravity of her situation. When she is told that her husband is dead, she asks innocently: "Yes, but what is that to me?" Such child-marriages, and the consequent treatment of widows, rouses not only our sympathy, but also our anger.

According to Virginia Woolf, "Fiction must stick to facts and the truer the facts, the better the fiction. Fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so slightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners". Judged from this standpoint, Munshiji's novels fulfil the requirement completely. For the plot of the novel, he evidently looked round him and put

down his observations on paper. So true is his reflection of life in letters. Anyone who knows anything about life would readily agree with the theme of the novel. The sufferings of Mani do not, at any time, seem to be artificially intensified or exaggerated to any great degree. And through all these sufferings Mani emerges purified of what dross, if any, she might have possessed at the outset. One is tempted to apply to her the words Thomas Hardy said of Tess of the D'Ubervilles: "A pure woman". It is Mani who asks her one-time seducer Gambhirlal to marry her; it is she who insists upon Kashi's recall; her escape from Tungabhadra's house of ill-fame is another of her merits; it is her unremitting service and sacrifice that brings Muchkund back to life and happiness; she is not only a pure woman, but one is tempted to say, a noble figure, good in herself and the cause of goodness in others such as Gambhirlal, Chandulal and even Pranshankar.

Her love for Muchkund is deep, sincere, lasting. Before they are married in the flesh, the marriage of their minds has taken place long since. Their love is true and so it does not alter "when it alteration finds"; the path of their love does not run smooth for quite some time and yet she never hesitates, never doubts, but goes breast-forward.

The characters in the book are very vividly drawn. The yogi at whose ashram Mani takes a brief refuge is the very anti-thesis of Swami Anantanand of *Verni Vasulat*, though by no means any the less striking on that account. As of Belial in *Paradise Lost*, we might say of him: "Though his tongue dropt manna, And could make the worse appear the better reason, his thoughts were low—to vice industrious, but to nobler deeds timorous and slothful."

Gambhirlal, Chandulal, Jora Bhagat, each have a part to play and act it with credit.

As the author admits in his preface, there appear to be some shortcomings in the novel. Even Homer sometimes nods, we are told, and the discrepancies noticed are not of any great consequence. For instance, we are told in one place that Kashi, Muchkund's first wife, was illiterate and had to call in a neigh-

bour to read her a letter; she is then described a few pages ahead, as *writing* a letter to her parents mentioning in detail all her hardships; it is indeed surprising to find Muchkund not asserting himself before Kashi till it is too late. Muchkund is told in one place by Mani herself that she was a child-widow and yet he appears to be shocked when he hears this piece of information from her again, a little later. Chance and coincidence seem to be stretching their arm a little too far; Rao Saheb Gambhirlal who was the cause of Mani's downfall appears in succession as Mamlatdar of Mithakuva, President of the Samaj Uddharni Sabha; it is to his house that Mani is taken when a constitutional question arises; he is in Bombay sometime later when Mani is also in the city; he is present at Tungabhadra's when Mani has to go there for a loan. It is also remarkable that Chandulal should be Muchkund's employer, his father's friend, Mani's caller at Tungabhadra's, Mani Karnika's brother-in-law, and Inspector of the School where Mani is a teacher. The characters seem to do just what is expected of them and are found, more often than not, where they are least expected but most wanted. It is a little sad to find the pseudo 'yogi' basking in the sunshine of happiness, as he apparently seems to be doing, at the end of the book; it is also surprising to see Mani forget the duration of her married life and say to the yogi, that it was three months when we are told earlier that it was only a month long.

But these are minor shortcomings. In a work of such collossal magnitude it is natural for these details to be overlooked. Besides, they do not strike the reader on casual acquaintance with the book. And then, one is more than abundantly recompensed by the virtues of the book, including its mocking humour.

Pranshanker Pandya, Muchkund's father, with his unique combination of Sanskrit-cum-Gujarati, becomes a laughable figure reminiscent of Bhadrambhadra; the ways and means adopted by Dr. Dhaneshchandra and Pleader Maruti for self-advertisement, the scene at the Kashtanashteshwar temple at night, are some of the many humorous situations in the book. But the humour here is not pure or quite light. It seems as

if the author has dipped his pen in gall prior to writing these pages, the strain of cynicism runs through all.

Social tyranny and injustice receive at his hands a well-deserved and sharp rebuke. The book serves as an eye-opener. As Munshiji tells us, there are innumerable Manis and Much-kunds in this world who live and die like dumb-driven cattle, thanks to the blind apathy of Society and its customs; their whole life is struck by the fret and fever of this world. And who is ultimately responsible for this dire cruelty? In *Verni Vasulat*, Tanman was forced to marry Karamdas against her wishes and in preference to a better man; here Muchkund is compelled to tread the same path and to consider the spiteful Kashi as his wife!

In *Svapnadrashta*, (The Visionary) we are given a slice of the political life of India during the first decade of the present century. Those were the days of the partition of Bengal —*Bang-Bhanga*—the Svadeshi and boycott movement, when the feelings of Indians had risen to a high pitch and people had become politically conscious. The author seems to remember vividly his own life during those stormy days when he was a student at the Baroda College, and these he refers to in this, his first attempt to weave contemporary political forces into fiction.

Sudarshana, the hero, has fed himself on visions since his birth and this has given a stimulus to his latent political fervour. The books that he read, the sights that he saw—all seemed to heighten this urge and when whilst an undergraduate at College, he saw and heard Aravind Ghosh, he felt that the time had arrived when he should put his ideas into practice. "Mother" India beckoned to him and asked him to find her lord and master. He thereupon got together his friends and formulated various plans for the attainment of freedom and independence for his country within a measurable time. So sanguine was he in his outlook and so obsessed by his vision of a free India that he had no place for women in his life. He therefore disregarded his parents' choice, Sulochana, just as she disregarded him, for she was a college student, and did not much care for "simpletons" like him, who went about shabbily,

even uncleanly dressed, and gave no quarter, no haven, to the flame of love in their hearts.

In the company of his friends like Keshasp, Mohanlal Parekh and Ambalal Desai, Sudarshana attended the Surat Session of the Indian National Congress held in December 1907 and witnessed for himself the pandemonium that reigned there, the arguments and efforts of the two parties—the *Jehal* and the *Maval* under Tilak and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta respetcively—to arrive at a compromise, the meeting under the presidentship of Dr. Rash Behari Ghose. He felt that the day of deliverance had at last arrived, that the new dawn was breaking. Even the words of Prof. Kapadia who had acted as a damper on his enthusiasm by pointing out that all his seeds had fallen on barren soil and that his friends were broken reeds, did little to allay his spirit.

On the 31st of January of the following year a meeting was to be held of those "friends" and a plan of action was to be formulated. A little before the day came, Sudarshana saw these ardent "patriots" fall back from the positions they had taken up; some sold their fervour for "a mess of pottage", others referred to "difficulties" and so on the fateful day Sudarshana found himself alone—"majestic, thought in ruin". The iron entered his soul and the scales fell from his eyes. Prof. Kapadia was right after all. They were all, himself included, he now saw, just children politically, foolish and unmanly. In this state of utter disillusionment he took out his "plans", the fruit of untold labour and pain, the result of many a sleepless day and night, the children of his flowering intelligence—all that remained now of his "Secret Society" and of its "unflinching" resolve to attain independence—and applied a match to them!

Later, he acquiesced in his father's wishes, qualified for the bar and presumably settled down to an uneventful life. The story is grand both in its conception and execution. Like an epic it opens in *media res* and the description of the early years that went to the formulation of the visionary in Sudarshana is indeed superb, as also is the command given by Mother India to the young undergraduate. It is reminiscent of the

thirty-fifth "song offering" in the *Gitanjali,* beginning with "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high".

The description of the Baroda College, of the prominent persons of the time, of authentic historical incidents of the day, make the book a document of great value. The humour of this book is also of a high order. How delightful it is to be introduced to the worldly-wise but proverbially absent-minded Prof. Kapadia—surrounded by his welter of volumes—who drew out knowledge from books as lungs breathe in air! How naive is the quixotry of Girjashanker Shukla! the conversation that Naranbhai holds in the train between himself and his conscience, prior to seeking the Hon. Mr. Jagmohanlal; the spectacle of Sheth Mabhai "Landlord and Big-Leaf-dish and cup Merchant" fawning before Mr. Smith—all these may have their tragic sides but their humour cannot ever be ignored.

And, above all, overshadowing every hill and dale, stands like collossus the figure of Sudarshana "deep on whose front engraven deliberation sat". Like Milton he felt born to achieve great things, to be the protector of *gobrahman,* to be the continuator of his country's greatness and glory. If he was able to do little and achieve even less, the fault seems to lie, to a greater extent, elsewhere and on other shoulders. We share in his grief and become partners of his disillusionment when towards the end, his eyes are opend to the stark realities of the materialistic world. We might be tempted to pity him, to disagree with him, but never to blame him—so thoroughly does he become a part of ourselves.

Very different in conception and execution is *Sneha Sambhram* (Bewilderment of Love) wherein the note of humour is predominant. The relations that subsist between the gay and debonair Prof. Pritamlal and Vasumati, wife of the Braggart Shamsher Bahadur Jorawarsingh, the contemplated elopement and its surprising sequel, are indeed fair game for readers of light literature. The practical joke perpetrated upon Jorawarsingh at the suburban villa of the unwitting Tribhovandas is one of the highlights of this interesting comedy. The contrast between the quarrelous and bed-ridden Mrs. Dhankore Pritamlal and the charming and naive Mohini or Vasumati, the sharp,

witty repartees of aunt Jaskore, show a deft handling of characters and the reader goes through the whole gamut of feminine sentiments and emotion.

As a social novelist, therefore, Munshiji has contributed largely and generously. He has touched on social foibles with the pen and the zest of a reformer—salted with shafts of appropriate humour; the political condition of his country, some three decades ago, he has observed with an unerring eye; the moral tone has been uniformly high and uplifting; Good triumphs over Evil, and the reader is asked to harbour no thoughts of Revenge for the ills that flesh might be heir to, for "the rarer action is in Virtue than in Vengeance."

In the field of the short story, Munshiji has contributed one volume comprising some twenty stories, entitled *Mari Kamala ane Biji Vato* (1924). These stories cover a sufficiently wide range of matter and style extending from what might be described as parody to real first-rate narration: There is no dull uniformity about them varied as they are by different themes, sentiments and forms of expression. The thread of a common purpose—that of laying bare the crudities and foibles of social and domestic life with a view to reforming them—runs through them all.

Shamalshahno Vivaha, Gomatidadanun Gaurava, Shakuntala ane Durvasa, Khangi Karbhari—are easily the best in the collection, and to an extent typical of the contents of the book. The first is a satire on unequal marriages wherein a fifty-two year old bridegroom sets out to wed his fifth wife, a girl of five. The second exposes the fact that some families take pride on supposed date which if and when known would certainly alter their attitude to a considerable extent. The element of surprise in this story is indeed refreshing. The treatment that modern educated women mete out to the senior members of their husband's family, the scant sympathy and discourtesy they show to those who deserve infinitely better treatment at their hands, their infatuation for one another, and the consequent neglect of their own children is the theme of the third story. It is vivid and touching and succeeds in driving home the moral lesson. The fourth—*Khangi Karbhari*—is again a hu-

morous satire, suitably mixed with an unexpected climax, on the "busy" men of the day who entrust everything to their Private Secretary, even correspondence with their wife, and live aloof from their hearth and home. *Ek Patra* is the heart-rending narration of an "unfortunate" sixteen-year old maiden who, in this her last letter, lays bare her soul without any reserve. She informs her husband of the lack of charity in him and goes on to relate how her life was devoid of all impress of justice, tolerance, even affection and happiness. This sad account re-vivifies before the reader what is undeniably the condition of many a married woman. *Navi ankhe Juna Tamasha*, is a pure fantasy and may shock the traditionalists by virtue of its unorthodox treatment of revered mythological and historical persons. The reader has only to remember that it is a dream after all and hence it need not be taken so seriously.

How the memory of an ill-done or undone act may obsess the person concerned even to delirious fever is the subject of *Smarandeshni Sundari; Kandu Akhyan* and *Stri Samshodhak Mandal no Varshik Samarambh* are both light parodies and help to spend an hour in innocent merriment.

Social cutsoms which blind people to the innate good of others as well as their own and thus help to give a long lease of life to contemptible and out-moded conventions are exposed here—inter-mingled with a fair amount of humour or pathos to suit the need of any particular story. Thus these stories serve a double purpose. They help to pave the way to a better state of social life and also assist in the passing of an idle day by crowding it with merriment and laughter.

Literature, we are told, is conscious contact with environment, and Munshiji's fiction proves indisputably the justice of the remark. Life is the data, the raw material from which he makes the marbles of his novels and stories. They are, therefore, like many-sided, and, like it again, very interesting and thought-provoking. If Munshiji is great as a social dramatist, he is greater as a writer of social fiction!

Munshiji's genius is analytic; his wit mingled with wisdom. He pens his fiction with an eye to facts, and hence, more

often than not, it has a serious purpose. "To show something that is wrong but not conceded to be such, to throw some light upon it and even by exaggeration, if need be, to compel people to see that which they are unable to or unwilling to see"—this is the aim of his writings. Reforming by ridicule is his *forte,* if not his sole objective.

6

Epic of the Ancient Aryans

[Munshiji's literary reputation rests mainly on his numerous writings in Gujarati. Of these, the pride of place is easily taken by the series of plays and novels which form one significant group and constitute what may be termed—The Epic of the Ancient Aryans. All these works are based on our ancient mythology; but they are not mere echoes of old stories and legends but significant interpretations of epoch-making events and incidents. The India of pre-historic times, its heroes and heroines, its thought and traditions—live brightly in the pages of these works. The breath of modernity which the author blows into these, renders them fresh to each new generation. This is precisely the reason why this series is easily the best of Munshiji's works. It is also the most monumental of his Gujarati writings—considering the amount of labour and time the author has spent in this work, and as also evidenced by the vast scholarship and commendable art he exhibits in them. This surely is Munshiji's 'magnum opus'. No apology need, therefore, be made for including below a rather detailed analysis of the series with appropriate comments.—Ed.]

This series of plays and novels are woven out of episodes which were traditional even in the period of the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. The whole series, however, makes one epic dealing with the life and achievements of heroes and heroines known to the Vedic and the pre-Vedic period. Its central thread is provided by the achievements of three great families of Vedic Rishis. The first one is the family of Bhrugus, the priest-warriors who were associated with *Atharvans* the fire priests. They claimed descent from Bhrugu who first brought down fire to men. The two other families were descended—one from Vasishtha and the other from Vishvamitra, the two most notable of Vedic Rishis who fought in the Battle of Ten Kings referred to in the *Rigveda Samhita*.

Many authors, ancient, mediæval and modern, have written about one or the other of the great men or women of these families and have woven new stories out of their traditional exploits. Munshiji, however, has ventured on untrodden ground. He has not tried to copy the character and atmosphere as given in the *Puranas* as is generally done, but has created the Aryan strength and character and atmosphere as given in the *Rigveda Samhita.* He has also ventured, by relying upon a few syncronisms and adding a few imaginary relations to connect these events, to produce a connected piece in order to present through romance the wonderful panorama of Aryan advance from the Punjab to the Narmada in an age which preceded that of the *Brahmanas* and the *Mahabharata.* No doubt, in creating the unfamiliar Rigvedic atmosphere the novels and the dramas appear at times obscure. But that could not possibly be helped, if an author has to portray the Vedic age.

Part one deals with purely mythic times when gods and men and Danavas used to meet. Parts two and three deal with Vedic period portrayed in the *Rigveda Samhita.* Most of the material on which the author has built the fabric was collected by him in his research lectures.

PART ONE

PUTRA SAMOVADI (Like unto a son)—A Play.

The background of this drama is the dawn of the mythic period. The descendants of Manu wander all over the earth fighting among themselves or with the Danavas, the residents of the nether world. The devas, the shining gods, living on the top of the golden-hued mountains also wage incessant war with the Danavas.

Shukra, the ancient sage, the master of *Sanjivani*, the magic chants which restore the dead to life, is the high priest of the Danavas. His daughter, Devayani, is golden-hued, stalwart, and beautiful and strong.

To Shukra comes Kacha, the son of Brihaspati the high priest of the gods, and meets Devayani, armed with bow and arrows and clad in deer skin.

Kacha tells her that he is the son of Brihaspati, the high-priest of the gods, and wants to be a pupil of Shukra. In the course of conversation he tells her of the lofty palaces of the Gods.

Kacha (Smiling): You cannot imagine the splendour of our palaces unless you see them. In our land, a damsel like you would not step down from the diamond-studded coach.

Devayani (with contempt): I wonder how your girls like such a life; I would not like it.

Kacha: But to make them happy, we have songs and dance and music and the festival of flowers.

Devayani (enthusiastically): I would love to see the palaces. Once I told father that we should have a palace here.

Kacha: Then?

Devayani: Father said no. He said "Independence can only be preserved in a hut. In a palace, helplessness creeps in."

Kacha straightaway falls in love with Devayani, but trembles at the prospect of facing the mighty Shukra. When he sees the sage approaching, he says—

> "That is the body which laughs at age; these, the locks, which rival the lion's mane; this, the forehead, reflecting heaven's profundity; that, the body, which stands, erect like Mount Kailasa. Even the lord of Death, the fearful Yama, can neither kill him nor frighten him, but like a frightened child steals away from his presence."

Shukra comes and accepts Kacha, the son of his friend and co-pupil and his rival, Brihaspati, as his own pupil.

To this mighty Shukra comes Vrishaparvan, the king of the Danavas, tall, dark and strong, with a peacock crown on his head and a naked sword in his hand. Shukra tells him of his new pupil. The king is suspicious of the son of his bitterest enemy. Shukra, however, is firm, the vows of the learned are strict and no aspirant for learning could be turned away.

> "Why are you frightened", says the Sage, "What can this boy do? And how long will last the strength which a mere boy can break?"

Vrishaparvan then tells the high priest of the message of peace sent by Indra, the lord of gods. Vraka, the son of Vrisha-

parva, also informs Shukra that his people are tired of the long war that they have been waging. The old Guru says:

> "I know, weakness always enters with the message of peace. When Indra sends his message, you feel tired of war; and no sooner you feel tired of war, than Indra begins to win his war. The same old story, year after year, age after age. But does he get tired when you send him a message of peace?"
>
> "But the gods are different—for they have the protection of the thunderbolt," says Vraka. Shukra adds scornfully—"Protection makes life a graveyard. Helplessness born of protection has not even the dignity which the stillness of death possesses. My boy, frustration spreads its net around you when you see a life of protection. Whose protection does Vrishapravan want? Who protected your ancestors? Who protects me, year after year? Child, it is the man of little faith who needs protection."

Shukra then tells Vraka, of how his ancestors fell from the high estate. "Listen, Vraka, learn and forget it not. Your ancestors lived under the shade of the beautiful forests, on the cool heights of majestic mountains. As the sun rose they went out to hunt. When the moon rose they danced with joy unbounded. Vraka, what a life it was!

> "Life was wonderful, for they had no fear . No one had taught them nice distinctions in the name of morality. No one had invented heaven for the virtuous. No one knew to placate a tyrant with a smile. No one had thought that freedom was unrighteous. No one had made weakness attractive by calling it devotion. But then came the messenger of Brihaspati, the master of crafty words, spreading the magic web of words. Then, your ancestors with their simple mind and easy temper lost their freedom; and they fell."
>
> And he added: "Better to die than to remain protected. Ponder over what I have told you. Let your head touch the sky. Let your look frighten the gods. He who bends is broken."

Then to the sage comes Devayani. She is already in love with Kacha. The wise Shukra warns her. Devayani finds her father in an unhappy mood. He has no son, and, so feels that after him there will be no heir to his courage and his message

of life. Devayani hastens to assure him that she will be as good as a son. Shukra is wiser.

With tears in his eyes Shukra says—

> "Child, a daughter is her lord's. When your husband will come, the father will be useless, a chattel to be thrown away. Your husband's hope and joy will be yours. You will be happy in his joy, wretched in his woes. My life will lose its mainstay and my message will be lost to the world." The proud man's heart gives vent in anguished words. "When I will grow weak and helpless, no son of mine will inspire me with my own message. When I die no son of mine will invite the world to the battle of freedom around my banner."

With shining eyes Devayani replies:—"No father. You are my maker, my teacher and my god. You have brought me up with your love, inspired me with your message, your name and prowess are mine. Your friends are mine. Your foes shall also be mine." And adds: "Hereafter your words shall be my law; your hope, my goal. Freedom Incarnate, the memories of your mighty deeds shall be the breath of my life. Then, looking at the mountain tops—where live the gods, she exclaims in defiance "And listen, Ye, Indra, listen, Ye Brihaspati, from today, Shukra is no longer sonless."

And the trembling Kacha who hears these words from a distance is pale with fear for he had orders from his father to marry this girl and bring her to heaven.

He says: "Oh! Lord of Gods have I to make this woman a wedded wife? The sky will crack; the earth will sink; and the heaven itself will be a wilderness."

II

Devayani is in love with Kacha, and Vrishaparvan and his men have not outgrown their distrust of this enemy in their midst and decide to kill him. The demons knew that Shukra can restore any one to life but not himself. So they cut Kacha to pieces, cook the pieces as food and give it to the sage himself.

Devayani, the fiery woman, does not find Kacha and calls upon her father to bring him to life. Shukra refuses to do so. "Kacha" he says "is the son of my bitterest enemy."

Devayani upbraids Shukra for being a wicked father, for he is not willing even to save his beloved daughter. The loving father relents; Shukra with his magic power calls upon Kacha to reply from wherever he might happen to be. Kacha replies that he is in the stomach of Shukra himself, unable to come out unless Shukra himself is cut to pieces. Devayani rages with anger. She wants her father to teach Kacha the *Sanjivani Mantra*—the magic incantation for restoring life to the dead. He will then be restored to life and come out of Shukra's stomach killing him and then with the knowledge of the magic incantation Kacha would restore Shukra himself to life. She storms; she upbraids him, she throws herself on her knees. Shukra is adamant. He would never allow *Sanjivani*, the one source of the Danavas' invincibility, to go into the hands of his enemy's son.

> Devayani becomes bitter: "Master of knowledge," she asks. "Are you afraid of teaching your pupil, and you call yourself a true Brahmin? Is this your love of your child? —your pupil? Rather than be the daughter of such a father I would sooner hurl myself from yonder mountain top and rejoin my mother in the other world."
>
> Shukra could not resist his beloved daughter's wishes any longer. Bitterly he says: "Wait. Do as you please and destroy me and my race. Shukra will not make you unhappy in his own interest. Go, disgrace of my family! Destroy my triumph and my fame. O, Brihaspati, I concede you victory, myself. I am restoring your son to life." Shukra then teaches Kacha his magic incantation of restoring life.
>
> "Fear not,
> Retreat Not,
> Surrender not.
> Fight always,
> In defeat and in triumph—
> In life or in death,
> In this world and in the next."

Kacha learns the magic incantation, breaks open the stomach of Shukra and comes out.

Kacha has now secured his objective and wants to return to his people. But Devayani turns upon him fiercely like a

tigress and orders him to restore Shukra to life. And when he hesitates she angrily shouts "Do you hesitate to revive my father?" Kacha is frightened. Devayani stands by sternly insisting upon obedience. Kacha yields, recites the magic incantation, and Shukra is restored to life.

Kacha acknowledges Devayani's help in grateful terms:

> "Devayani, you are my *Sanjivani*. But for you I would have been dead." Devayani replies: "Kacha, I cannot live without you. You are the son of Brihaspati, the Lord of Speech. I am the daughter of Shukra. You are speech; I am action. What is the use of gilding truth by useless words? Come, let us go to father and get married: —it will be the wedding of heaven and earth."

Kacha is happy at the prospect of marrying Devayani. But he does not know his bride. He asks her to go with him to the Land of the Gods as a dutiful wife.

With a blaze in her eyes Devayani replies:

> "Go to the Lord of Gods! Do you intend to make the daughter of Shukra the daughter-in-law of Brihaspati and drag her to the court of the king of the God? You have now mastered the magic incantation of life. Kacha dear, why don't you keep both *Sanjivani* and Devayani."

Kacha is not able to face this bold and powerful maiden.

Then Devayani inspires Kacha to new ambitions:

> "Dearest! Come! I will give you happiness which no woman ever gave to man. In my lap you will forget the land of the gods. Listening to my throbbing words you will forget the songs of the Gandharvas. You will be the principal disciple of Shukra. You will be greater than your father both in learning and in speech."
>
> Kacha: "Devayani, don't be obstinate. I belong to the land of the Gods. The preceptor of the gods is my father. The king of gods is my master."
>
> Devayani: "The king of gods—your master! Kacha, you are a noble brahmin, and Shukra's disciple. Will you sell your soul to the Lord of the gods, forget the message of freedom which your Guru has taught you and prostrate yourself before Indra? You are the first among those who do not bend nor make anyone bend, the lord of *Sanji-*

vani, the best among immortals who serve not nor get served and still you speak these words?"

Kacha: (with determination): "Brihaspati's son will obey his father's mandate and follow his footsteps."

Devayani: "Kacha, dearest, you are learned and ambitious. There, you will be only the son of the high priest, an ornament of Indra's court. Here, you will be my master, my father's righthand man, the preceptor of Vrishaparvan. Are you still dissatisfied? Then come with me. Let us go to father. He and you and I will fight wars which the universe has never seen before. We will destroy the fortress of heaven, humble the pride of the Lord of the gods. Triumphant over the three worlds, we shall live, among the stars. By our message of life, we shall uplift the gods, the Danavas and the mortals. We shall purge their hearts of fear and meakness, and shall make them proud of self-confidence."

As she speaks, Devayani, stands erect, proud, resplendent, her breasts heaving; and then with a powerful and meaningful gesture, she calls upon him to obey. Kacha is dazed and looks on.

Kacha is overawed. He bows his head and admits defeat before this mighty woman. He confesses—

Devayani continues: "I made you the master of my heart: of the life's message of my father and myself."

"Devayani, I have no courage to accept your invitation. You are not a woman. You are the fierce goddess of might. I have made a mistake. Your flamnig body is not made for a lover. It has the radiance of a goddess. Your soul is not that of a woman who can serve her husband. It is made up of lightning and fire, world-destroying. I dare not accept you."

With wounded pride Devayani asks: "What do you want then? Is there no other way of my marrying you except by betraying father?"

Kacha :Devayani, strike me—if you will, I shall worship you all my life but I cannot marry you. In my heart lives the eternal desire of the mere man to make my wife my own. I desire to mate with one who merges her life in me; who accepts me and my work wholly, who is happy when I am happy, who is my solace in pain, who worships me and becomes the mother of children who worship me; who is madly proud of my father, of me, of his glory and mine. How can you be a proud daughter-in-law of Brihaspati? How

can you joyfully accept his commands? How can it happen? Devayani, you are an elemental power. How can you possibly be trapped in a domestic net? Devayani, how can you be the daughter-in-law of Brihaspati?

Suddenly Devayani wakes up to the difference between a son and a daughter. Proudly she turns to Kacha and says:

"Save me from your kind words then. But remember this: you lack the courage to marry the daughter of Shukra now. Go and tell all who live in the land of the Gods that Devayani is no longer the daughter of Shukra. She is like unto a son to him, ambitious to destroy the pride of the gods."

And later when Kacha takes leave of Shukra to go to the heavens, she gives him the last message in the hearing of her father.

"Go and tell your father that you cannot get the daughter of Shukra by an exchange of such a son as you. Go."

Shukra adds proudly: "And, Kacha, also tell your father that Shukra is no longer without a son."

III

The final stage of the war between the Danavas and the gods commences. The Danavas have lost all confidence, for they love peace—"Peace that beat men, which converts a mighty hero into an ignoble insect" as Shukra called it.

Devayani, by her valour, had already become a terror to the gods. Now she enlists the help of Yayati, the king of Men, who had rescued her from a well when she was thrown into it by Sharmishtha, the daughter of Vrishaparvan the king of Danavas. She now decides to win him by using the arts of a woman and thus brings his multitudinous army to the help of the Danavas.

Devayani: King, I am a hermit's daughter and know not what it is to feel shy like a daughter of Man. I do not know who will be my master. Every evening I sit on that hill-top and look towards the wide expanse of waters waiting, waiting for the lover who has yet to come. (and then with half-closed eyes, adds) I see my lover, one

among millions, handsome like the god of Love, valorous like the God of War and loving like your grand-father Pururavas. Earth-shaking, he will be the support of the helpless; world's conqueror, he will long to win the three worlds.

Inspired by her tempting and fiery words, Yayati feels roused to an impulse to win the three worlds—with this wonderful woman by his side. Step by step she induces him to offer her marriage.

Yayati: Dearest mine, I was born, then I have got you. Now I understand the mysteries of these events. Why was all this? Only because I am destined to be the lord of the three worlds. Your words have aroused the sleeping purpose of my life.

Yayati, fascinated by the beauty and the passion of Devayani, marries her. But his ambition was, of a very human kind and he proposes to go to Nandanvan for the honeymoon. Devayani is relentless:—

"How can we enjoy without securing the throne of Indra? She takes her husband away from pleasures, she also takes with her Sharmishtha, the daughter of Vrishaparvan, as a slave girl. It is the punishment which Devayani inflicts for Sharmishtha's crime in throwing Devayani into a well."

IV

Fifteen years pass by. Driven by Devayani, Yayati has waged incessant wars against the gods. In these ceaseless campaign his only comfort has been Sharmishtha who had been living in a little home of peace and love. Often he steals to this spot unknown to Devayani. Yayati says to Sharmishtha: "Dear, you are the only heaven of rest for my restless soul. Here with you, in this hut I am no longer a war-hero struggling ceaselessly to secure Indra's throne. I have this small but peaceful home. Here waiting for me, are you, my beloved wife. Here is my universe of peace, tiny though it is, and of that universe you are the presiding goddess."

Yayati, the mortal, is tired of struggles. In search of her husband, Devayani comes upon this spot, sees him in company of the hated Sharmishtha and her son. Naturally she is furious and bitter against him and upbraids him and Sharmishtha.

Shukra enters. Sharmishtha throws herself at his feet and begs for Yayati's life:

> "Merciful, have mercy on me. Do not do anything to him. If you want to punish, I am here. Guru, reduce my children to ashes but spare him. Oh! Devayani, I have only taken from you what was left over. I have taken nothing which was yours. Let him be free; let him not die. I shall remain indebted to you for all my life."

Devayani wants her father to curse Sharmishtha. But the sage would not. He is wise. He tells Devayani: 'I am not surprised that the voluptuous Yayati prefers the healing love of Sharmishtha to your fierce, all-consuming company." He refuses to curse Sharmishtha. He only wants to punish Yayati and therefore he lays his curse upon him that he be an old man for the rest of his life. Yayati, shocked at the prospect of premature old age, grovels in the dust.

Then Shukra speaks thus to the broken-hearted Devayani:

> "You are an ascetic. You are young. You have yet to reach your goal, victory. You have in you a desire to fight. If you are overborne by conflict in your life, who would inspire me? Who would destroy the foundations of Indra's throne?"

Yayati, now a very old man trembling in every limb, wants his youth back. In humiliating terms he supplicates the sage to make him young again.

> "Give me back my youth. Give me back my strength, my powers, my rushing blood, my iron muscles. The zest of life has not yet left me. My desires have not yet known satiety. How shall I bear age?"

He prostrates himself before Shukra who ultimately relents and says that if any young man is prepared to take over his age, Yayati would be young again. Devayani is indignant at the depth to which her husband can degrade himself. Shar-

mishtha persuades her son Puru to offer himself to take over the age of his father. And Yayati becomes young again.

Once Yayati is young, Devayani becomes still more relentless, insistent.

Yayati bursts in anger:

"King, you who conquered the world must conquer the three worlds."

With timidity Yayati speaks:

"Again the same thing, the conquest of the three worlds, no sooner than I become young."

"Yes, come. The towers of heaven invite me, and our army awaits you."

Devayani answers sternly:

"Devayani, elemental spirit, I am tired of you, you do not rest and you do not permit anyone to rest."

But he has finally to yield to her all the same.

The Danavas and Men led by Yayati, Devayani and Vrishaparvan storm the abode of the gods. Yayati, anxious to ascend the throne of Indra, the Lord of Gods, admires the attack. He is in ecstasies at the prospect of occuying the heavenly throne. Devayani comes and tells him what Shukra wants.

"Break Indra's throne into pieces and give to every hero a piece thereof. Grind the thunderbolt into dust and mix it with earth. Make one world out of heaven, the earth and the nether region. Let Gods, Danavas and Men be equal and free, walking hand in hand."

Yayati is angry. He has not conquered Indra for the purpose of destroying the dignity of godhead, he thinks the Guru has grown old.

Devayani attempts to appease him:

"Son of man, have patience. Do not find fault with Shukra grey, with the experience of ages. Do you think that this triumph is achieved by your valour?"

Vrishaparvan also is only too anxious to wreak his revenge on the gods.

And Yayati is anxious to seat himself on Indra's throne.

And so he asks:

"If we break the throne, where shall we sit?"

Devayani replies:

"On plain level ground, where there is no difference of high and low."

"Shall we not sit on this throne?"

"No, king, no. From it have been flowing the stream of cruelty and oppression. Whoever sits on it has, age after age, offered favours and spread corruption, insisted on subservience and spread helplessness, caused terror and produced fear."

But Yayati's vanity is unbounded and he continues: "I have won this Indra's throne by my valour. I shall sit on it. I shall hold the thunderbolt in my hand. The three worlds shall worship me. If you do not wish to share it with me, I shall invite Sharmishtha to do so. And why there is Indra's queen."

Devayani laughs at Yayati in contempt.

Vrishaparva wants to occupy the land of the Gods as a fruit of victory. But Yayati, with the authority of a conqueror, wants Vrishaparvan to go down and live in the Nether World, his proper home. A quarrel ensues between the old allies Yayati and Vrishaparvan and in a duel Yayati kills Vrishaparvan.

Yayati then seats himself on the eternal throne of the Gods, and says to himself:

"To rule the world as I wish, to shape life as I desire, to receive the devotion of millions—such privileges only the fortunate like me can enjoy. Ancestors! Look down from your abode. My fame shall immortalise your exploits".

Then Indra is brought before Yayati as a prisoner. Yayati, full of pride, tells Indra:

"Go with your gods and live in the Nether World. Vrishaparva is dead, and there is vacancy there. I shall protect you and you shall serve me."

Indra retorts: "We seek no protection by service. We expect no protection from anyone but ourselves."

Yayati is naturally angry and threatens to destroy Indra.

Indra: "You cannot kill me."

Yayati (in a threatening tone): This throne of Indra is in my hands.

Indra: The throne belongs to him who sits on it.

Yayati: This thunderbolt is mine.

Indra: The weapon is for him who is fearless.

Yayati (angrily): Am I afraid?

Indra wrenches the thunderbolt from Yayati's hands. Yayati, frightened, conceals himself behind the throne. Indra threatens to destroy Yayati.

Indra: Vain man, do you think that we were vanquished by you and your armies? Fool, we were overcome only by that glorious victory, Shukra by his inflinching will to Victory.

And then Indra hurls down Yayati to the earth.

V

In the valley of the Nether World, among the rotting corpses of men and demons, lies the dead Vrishaparva. Yayati also lies there unconscious. Devayani is moving on the battlefield cursing the cowardice which would not accept the strength of Shukra. She looks contemptuously at her fallen husband.

Yayati comes to his senses and is frightened to see his terrible wife in his dream.

"No, no. It is a dream," says he. "That obstinate woman went to her father. She cannot again come. Indra, have mercy on me."

Devayani: I have not come to you Indra hurled you from heaven and threw you at my feet. What can I do?" (And adds sorrowfully), Oh, king, even the memory of a brave struggle terrorises you so much. I will not ask you again to fight, to regain your manhood to preserve your independence. Go to your earth. Worshipful, begin to prostrate yourself before the Gods. Mutter ceaselessly Indra's name with upraised hands. With tearful eyes beseech the favour of the God of Heaven. Destroy your 'self' so that you may not have even the spirit of a worm. You who hoped to seat yourself on the throne of Indra—you. the wretch, will then receive the favour of Indra. Then your god will give you food, enough to live; strength enough to serve and happiness just enough not to drive you

to suicide. And when he gives you what is yours, take it with prayerful hands and bless his name that he made you no more miserable than what you have been.

Yayati, however, has no illusion about his strength.

"I am meek; I am a servant of my God. His mercy is my only strength."

In the meantime Indra comes and wants to embrace his grand-daughter Devayani. She tells him sternly:

"Stand away. You are the lord and master of the subservient. Come to embrace me only when you come as my grandfather. At this moment, we are laying the foundations of the freedom of the oppressed. You shall not touch the daughter of Shukra."

Form behind the rock Shukra appears.

Indra invites Shukra to his festival of victory. Shukra, laughs. He tells him:

Shukra: Indra, you are mistaken.

Indra (prostrating himself): Great Bhrugu, may you be pleased.

Shukra: My son, shall I give you a blessing that your throne be no more and your thunderbolt be broken to fragments? But you will not like it.

Indra proudly proclaims that there is no one in the three worlds who can resist his might.

"No one dares to face you in the three worlds; and so, I shall not come. I shall come to you when you will no longer be sitting on your throne with the strength of your thunderbolt. But not till then."

Shukra is firm and unmoved by Indra's triumph. He says:

"Indra, the worlds which are yours shall be mine tomorrow. You have conquered everything, but I am unconquerable. Wherever I put my foot, there shall rise consuming power. Wherever my voice is heard, there shall resound the voice of freedom."

Indra (surprised): But you are alone!

Devayani: Lord of Gods, there is but only one Lord of light, but one source of inspiring ideals.

Indra, however, tries to persuade Shukra to let his grand-daughter Devayani come with him. Devayani declines.

> "I shall serve this noblest fighter of them all. I shall stand by the side of this breaker of bonds and inspire slaves to revolt; cowards to fight and the subservient to be masters."

Indra is insistent. He says that Devayani is the wife of Yayati, and on death, would, as a woman she will go to the abode of Yayati's ancestors. She could not keep the company of her father in the abode of her father's ancestors.

Shukra: You are right.

Devayani (anxiously): What does my mother's father say?

Shukra: Child, your grandfather is right. I cannot tie you down to me. When you die you will have to go with your husband's ancestors, not mine.

Devayani (shocked): Father, shall I not be with you and your fathers?

Indra (beseechingly): Guru, leave her behind.

Shukra: Devayani what is your wish?

Indra: It is not a matter of her wish.

Devayani (proudly raising her head): Wait, grand-father, (with blazing eyes) I shall see how my ancestors separate me from my father. Father, I shall come with you in this world and the next (with wide open eyes). Before my eyes I see the world's freedom and joy. Let us gather them.

She places her hand on Shukra's shoulders.

> "Come, then, child, let us begin our pilgrimage." How will the ancestors fetter us,—whom the three worlds cannot frighten."

Shukra: And, if need be, child, we shall create a heaven for ourselves, for the workers of world's freedom.

The father and the daughter who was like unto a son to him, disappear slowly. The shadows grow smaller in the moon-light. And the four quarters are filled with the music of the world's joy.

VI

PURANDARA PARAJAYA (The Conquest of Indra)

Purandara Parajaya, the first of the author's plays, revolves round the Puranic episode of Sukanya's wooing of the Ashvins.

Chyavana, the chief of the Bhragus, the Warrior-priests, carried on a war with God Indra. The God cursed the sage and even in his youth, he became old and decrepit.

The war between the Bhragus and Indra continues. The Bhragus are angry and in order to have an heir to their chief they get the decrepit sage married to young Sukanya, the daughter of the king of the Saryatas.

She is kept with the decrepit and unconscious Chyavana. She wants to run away but god Agni, the protecting god of the Bhragus, prevents her.

Sukanya cannot resist the call of the flesh and invokes the Ashvins, the twin gods, to take her away as their bride. The invocation is a frank appeal of a voluptuous maiden. She suddenly awakens to the sanctity of the marriage tie, and the fact that the Gods have made her one with Chyavana. Pride, social instinct and the call of purity are portrayed in the soliloquies of Sukanya. Her animal instincts are conquered by this idea and the next day when the Ashvins come to meet her she declines to go with them.

The Ashvins are pleased and cure Chyavana of his old age. Indra then makes his peace with Chyavana.

This worn-out theme has been leavened by a modern motive —an attempt to indicate how the idea that marriage is a sacrament sprang up in the early unsophisticated mind of the prehistoric man.

The play is a landmark in Indian literature as rescuing Puranic subjects from traditional treatment. The atmosphere is largely borrowed from the *Atharvaveda* with its magic chants and miraculous rituals.

VII

AVIBHAKTA ATMA (*Undivided Soul*)—A Play

This play deals with the love of Vasishtha and Arundhati. Vasishtha was one of the seven great *Rishis* who ultimately were translated to the heavens as the constellation of the Bear (so called in *Rigveda*), Ursa Major. Arundhati, wife of Vasishtha, was the only woman who as the inseparable mate of Vasishtha, found a place next to the star of Visishtha. In many ceremonials Arundhati is worshipped along with Vasishtha. Every wedded pair, immediately after the wedding ceremony, is pointed out the twin stars as the guardian deities of domestic life. According to Kalidasa, God Shiva himself was inclined to marry Parvati as a result of looking at the star of Arundhati, the changeless comrade of her lord.

Avibhakta Atma, or the Undivided Soul is a drama based on the love of Arundhati and Vasishtha, which, though always accepted as the ideal, was not sung in the literature of India before. In this work, Munshiji illustrates his theory of the absolute unity of husband and wife, the theme of the *Undivided Soul,* which has supplied the motive to many of his later works.

This play tries to recreate an episode belonging to the dawn of Aryan life. The Aryans once lived in the Golden Land which surrounded Mount Meru. Then god Varuna grew angry with them and snow descended upon their home. They had to migrate to other lands. Manu, the son of Vivasvat, saved five of the Arya tribes, which continued their wanderings for ages. Seven primaeval Sages had been glorified into the seven stars which formed the constellations of Ruksha, the Bear (The Ursa Major). The great God Varuna, however, promised the Aryas that all the Seven Great Rishis who formed that constallation will appear in certain living sages, and when they so appear, the Aryas will find a home where they will live happily afterwards. Six of the great Sages had been born; but the seventh one was not yet born. The Aryas were very anxious, for, god Varuna's promise had a restrictive clause. If within 100 years, all the seven Great Sages, did not appear in living

sages, the constellation of the Bear will not change a Sign and the Aryas will be destroyed. Sage Vasishtha, though young, had a great reputation for learning and self-discipline and was expected to be selected by the god Agni as the vehicle of the Seventh Sage for whom the Aryas were waiting. Arundhati, daughter of the sage Medhatithi, herself an ascetic, had also the ambition to be the human vehicle of the Seventh Sage, when god Agni, at a great sacrifice, chose to reflect the face of the sage in whom that Sage descended.

The First Act is placed in the Ashram of Medhatithi on the banks of the River Saraswati in Aryavarta. Vasishtha and Arundhati were lovers: Vasishtha the young sage, whose Vedic *mantras,* had acquired a reputation far beyond his age, comes to meet Arundhati in her father's Ashrama. When he was complimented about the beauty of his *mantras* he humbly confessed that he does not compose them.

> "In the morn or at night, when I sit on the bank of the Saraswati or the top of a mountain, the thousand-eyed Varuna whose path even the birds do not know, smiles on me. I then talk to Him. He talks to me and inspires me. I become strong with His strength, and on my tongue, sits the goddess of Speech. I speak, though I do not wish to do so. The *mantras* come to me effortlessly. Sage, I do nothing; I merely place myself in his hands."

Then Kratu, one of the sages in whom the six great sages had appeared, arrives at the hermitage of sage Pulastya, another great Sage, anxious to celebrate the centenary sacrifice in order that the seventh sage might appear among the Aryas.

Vasishtha with humility challenges the despondency of Kratu: "Master, the strength of the Arya is fadeless. Why are you so despondent?"

Kratu laughs at the young ambitious sage who wants to teach him the message of a new strength. Young Vasishtha replies, "What I teach gives both peace and equanimity. When peace and equanimity arise from strength then only are they victory and joy; for, they draw their power from the cosmic order of Varuna, the Great.

In the Second Act, Vasishtha asks Arundhati to marry him.

Visishtha: Arundhati, my pupils are tired of waiting for their master's wife, and for want of her, my cows languish.'

Arundhati (shaking her head): Vasishtha, how can I take that place?

Vasishtha (putting one of his hands in the other and looking intently at Arundhati): And why not? Arundhati, were we not each other's on the bank of the Saraswati in the ashram of the great Pulastya? We played together; we ran together; we laughed together; side by side we brought fuel and collected sacred grass. Hand in hand, we ran, and intertwining our feet, we fell. No woman is dearer to me than you, no man is nearer to you than myself. Arundhati, why don't you come and purify my ashram by your presence?

Arundhati: Vasishtha, but why talk of marriage? You are an ascetic and so am I. Why do we need the ties of the body? Domestic life is not for you and for me.

Vasishtha (with set lips): And why not? In the wide expanse of the seven rivers there is none like you and my place is not insignificant. When you see me, your eyes dance with joy. When I see you, my heart goes mad. Leave your foolish idea. Let our blood streams dance in harmony. (seeing Arundhati shake her head) Arundhati, think once again. Why let the streams of our life flow apart? Among thousands, there is scarcely a woman like you; Among thousands, there is scarcely a man like me; and if there are, they do not meet. And if they meet, they feel no delight in each other's company; and if they do, barriers keep them apart. What has not happened in ages has happened to us. Man and woman equal in all respects, yearn to be one; and can be one, only if your obstinacy did not stand in the way."

Arundhati: Vasishtha, enough, Mother Saraswati lives on your tongue, but I do not want to be persuaded. I do not want to let the years we have spent in stern self-discipline go waste.

Vasishtha: Arundhati, why do you say this? The happiness which will be ours in a home, will not be ours in loneliness.

Arundhati (oppressed with pain): Vasishtha, I know. But I am not like other women. I cannot even preserve the treasure which has fallen into my hands. I am mad.

Vasishtha (striking one hand with the other): But why?

Arundhati (sadly): Shall I tell you? First, there will be an end to our self-restraint.

Vasishtha (astonished): Why?

Arundhati: Vasishtha, the joys of domestic life do not befit us. How can the joys of the flesh and the joys of the world be ours?

Vasishtha (looking up): Why not? Are we not human? Have we no vigour? If the laws of Varuna can be maintained only by the sacrifice of the body, why did the god create it?

Arundhati (somewhat tired): Vasishtha, how can we preserve the laws of Varuna by submitting to the desires of the flesh?

Vasishtha: Why is it the desire of the flesh? Yes, if we were not fit for each other, if we disliked each other, if the duties to the family or the class came in the way, what I propose would certainly be despicable. But if a high souled man and woman like us do not undertake the burden of life, what will be the future of Aryas?

Arundhati (sadly): You with your self-discipline, do not understand even this! Is discipline in control or satiety? You just speak like a common man.

Vasishtha (firmly): I do not speak thoughtlessly. My self-restraint is unshaken. If I beg of you to marry me, lured by sensuality or your beauty or the mere pleasure of your company, I would have lost my self-control and fallen from my ascetic estate. But I do not crave for your beauty and form. If you lose your beauty I will adore you the more. If you are lame, I will carry you on my back. If you will die, I shall live smeared with your ashes. I do not want anything, I want you.

When Arundhati talks of the strength which austerities give, Vasishtha says:

"Is it strength to keep away from me the woman who is born to be myself, to be the mother of my children? What is the use of that strength that comes from preventing the birth of cultured and strong Aryas?"

Vasishtha then tells her of the Undivided Soul.

"Its halves float in the stream of time in search of unity. Often, the search proves fruitless. Sometimes, the corresponding halves meet; the whole springs again into existence; and the divided fragments become the Undivided Soul. Then its trials end.'

Arundhati tells him of her ambitions. She wants the Seventh Sage to appear in her; Vasishtha wants him to appear in him. Their ambitions conflict and their souls cannot be one.

But Vasishtha at once makes up his mind. He will not try any more to have the Seventh Sage appear in him. Arundhati should try for it alone, unhampered by a rival.

Then Vasishtha prays to Varuna:

> "Great Varuna, I, your son, call you. Give me the power of undaunted resolve."
>
> "God, you dwelt in my heart and said, Arundhati and I are one. I cannot live without her; I cannot be strong in self-discipline without her. Without her I cannot pray to you. Father, she and I are one. You let the two halves of our soul floating in the stream of time. You brought us together to fulfil your laws. Now let us realise our souls one and undivided.
>
> "I, my strength, and my austerities are not mine, but our Soul. Our soul is not in one body, but in two, inspiring both. If you come, come to uplift that soul. We are not two, but one.
>
> "I vow, by the strength I have, that I shall keep this soul, one and undivided."

VIII

Rumours are afloat that Vasishtha has one soul between him and Arundhati. At any rate that is what the young sage claims. The orthodox sages are angry; they find this belief sinful.

But suddenly two Great Sages who had already appeared arrive in exultation. In the sacrificial fire, Agni appeared in Vasishtha's form: the Seventh Sage had appeared in Vasistha!

But Vasishtha humbly declines to be the Seventh Sage who was to give the Aryans a home of their own. The sages are surprised. They have waited for this event for years, and now Vasishtha declines to accept this honour.

He gives the reason. He has one soul between him and Arundhati. The gods have only selected him as the Seventh Sage; thus the gods have declined to accept the unity of their souls and he would not accept the honour. The Sages are then angry, and curse Vasishtha.

The curse takes effect. His pupils leave him. Even his cows look at him frightened and run away.

Vasishta speaks to himself pitifully:

> "Mother, even you have forgotten me. Every one has forgotten me. Yes. None will speak to him whom Varuna forsakes. Arundhati, will you also forget me? Will you also leave me on account of this curse of Sages? (Covering his eyes) No. No, how can she forget? Vasishtha, if your strength disappears and if the Undivided Soul which you have seen is a myth, she will forget you (crying). No. No. The Undivided Soul is not a myth; I have not created it; it is created by Varuna, the Creator of the Cosmic Order, by my Father who has created her and me. (Piteously) And God, this is how you punish me for seeing a vision of this Soul? God, Varuna, if to view this Soul was a sin, why did you create me and Arundhati? (He faints).

When Arundhati and her father come to congratulate Vasishtha on being selected by the gods for the appearance of the Seventh Sage in him, they find Vasishtha unconscious. When Vasishtha regains consciousness, he tells them that he has been cursed by the sages for refusing to perform the sacrificial rites as the Seventh Sage.

> "I am cursed. My ashram is a wilderness. My disciples have run away. My cows have been taken away. Medhatithi—Oh! Even Father Varuna has turned his face from me!"

He then tells them to go away lest the curse may overtake them. In the meantime people come to burn down the ashram. Arundhati understands why Vasishtha has braved this curse. She takes him by the hand and asks him to step into the boat.

Vasishtha: Where are you going?

Arundhati: Where the holy Saraswati takes us—where Aryas never could come.

Vasishtha: But why are you coming?

Arundhati (smiling): Because our Soul takes us.

Vasishtha: What?

Arundhati (smiling): You lost faith in our Undivided Soul so soon? Where there is the Soul, the bodies must follow.

Then, hand in hand, they rush through the burning bushes and take the boat. "We are one—and one, shall we remain."

In the Fourth Act, Vasishtha, Arundhati, and their little son are living happily in an ashram far away from Aryavarta. They are happy; their only possession is a single cow; their only joy the fulfilment of the laws of their Undivided Soul.

But there is draught in Aryavarta, and the people attribute the calamity to the wickedness of Vasishtha and Arundhati. Some people come to kill them. They offer themselves to be killed, hand in hand.

Vasishtha is wounded. At this stage God Varuna comes to take him away. But Arundhati intervenes and claims that their Soul is one and undivided and that he should take both of them together.

But in the meantime the great Sages come there. In a fresh sacrificial session God Agni again appeared in the form of Vasishtha and Arundhati, indicating that the Seventh Sage has appeared in them both. But they find that Vasishtha is killed and their grief knows no bounds.

They find God Varuna there and beg of him to spare Vasishtha, for without him and Arundhati, the Seventh Sage will not appear and the Aryas will be destroyed.

Varuna grants them the desire. And the Seventh Sage appears as the Undivided Soul of Vasishtha and Arundhati. And the Aryans become happy and prosperous in Sapta Sindhu where the Undivided Soul of Vasishtha and Arundhati was found.

That is why the star of Arundhati is found with Vasishtha's in the Ursa Major.

PART TWO

The next part consists of a novel, *Vishvaratha;* a play, *Shambarkanya* (Shambar's Daughter); another *Deve Didheh* (Given by the Gods); and a third play *Vishvamitra Rishi.*

I. VISHVARATHA (A PLAY)

In distant Anupadesha (modern Gujarata) ruled Mahishmata, a fiery old chief of the frontier Aryan tribes of the Haihayas. His high-priest is Richika, the head of the Bhrugus, the warrior-priests who claim their descent from Shukra and Chyavana.

Mahishmat and his irrepressible Haihaya tribesmen defy the moral supremacy of Richika, and the High-Priest in consequence lays the Haihaya tribes under a curse and leaves Anupadesha (Gujarat) for Aryavarta, (the Punjab), the land of the cultured Aryans.

Richika comes to Gadhi, king of the war-like Bharatas, wooes his daughter, Satyavati and wins her hand.

To Satyavati, in course of time, is born a boy, Jamadagni. About the same time her mother also gives birth to a boy, lovable like a little god, heir to the royalty of the war-like Bharatas, and he is named Vishvaratha.

The two boys, Vishvaratha and Jamadagni, grow up together inseparably. When they are seven years old, they both fall in love with the beautiful daughter of Bharadvaja, the reknowned master of learning, Lopamudra by name. She has refused to marry, and, running away from the wrath of her father, sought an asylum with Richika, the Bhrugu sage. Young Vishvaratha and Jamadagni feel that, being such great friends, both of them must marry Lopamudra, though she was then older to them by several years. But they feel very disconsolate when they learn that Lopamudra will not marry any one.

Both the boys are sent for their education to the hermitage of the Sage Agastya, the most powerful of Aryan *Rishis* and the High-priest of Divodasa, king of the Trutsu tribe. On their way to the hermitage, they meet Vasishtha, the younger brother of Agastya. They also meet Sudasa, the peevish son of King Divodasa. This prince acquires an instinctive dislike to the handsome, open-hearted Vishvaratha and tries to drown him.

In the ashram of Sage Agastya, Vishvaratha soon becomes the centre of loyal friends; among them is Rohini, the little daughter of the sage himself, and Ruksa, the uncouth idiot who aspires to be a great sage himself. Jamadagni the Bhrugu, of

course, is the inseparable. Agastya also comes to love his pupil who was so quick at mastering the Vedic lore and the art of war, of which both he himself was such a renowned master. Sudasa who is also studying in the same hermitage, spends his time in intriguing against Vishvaratha and making fruitless attempts to outshine him. From his infancy Vishvaratha loving and loved, open-hearted and seeking guidance from the Gods becomes the centre of all who surround him, except Prince Sudasa, whose jealous temperament cannot brook a rival so attractive, who has already succeeded to the wide domains of the war like Bharatas.

Once King Divodasa of the Trutsus comes to the hermitage and the Sage Agastya holds an exhibition of his pupils' skill. Vishvaratha's graceful body, modest behaviour and skill in archery draws the admiring love of all present. Naturally, Sudas, Divodasa's son, is furious.

King Divodasa has set his heart on the destruction of Shambara, the King of the dark-skinned, snub-nosed non-Aryan Dasyus and the lord of ninety-nine forts. Agastya, the High Priest, is equally uncompromising. He believes in the purity and the destiny of the Aryan race, and would destroy the Dasyus whose ways were corrupting the morals of his people. In particular, he is unforgiving towards the new band of young Aryan sages who preach that Aryan culture is not a matter of race but of acquisition, and who would uplift the Dasyus into the Aryan fold. Of this band, the most fascinating and therefore the most dangerous is Lopamudra, daughter of the sage Bharadvaja, now grown into magnificent womanhood and yet unmarried. She is working for an understanding between the two races. Towards her, the mighty Agastya is uncompromising; no one dares to mention her name in his presence.

The war begins. Shambara's men steal one night into the hermitage of Agastya and kidnap Vishvaratha and his friend the uncouth Ruksa; they are taken to a far away fortress, where live the wives and children of Shambara, the Lord of Dasyus, now gone to war. The fort is in charge of his High Priest, the dreaded Bhairava, the favourite of Ugrakala, the phallus-shaped guardian deity of the warlike Dasyus.

The dark-coloured Dasyus are simple, affectionate and hospitable, unspoilt by sophisticated culture. They welcome the handsome Vishvaratha and his friend. Ugra, Shambara's favourite daughter, straightway falls in love with him. Unfamiliar with restraint, she makes bold love to the young prince. When she is repulsed, she pines for him during day and comes to his hut at night, pouring out her love-sick heart in frank and plaintive songs.

Shut up within the narrow fort and surrounded by a strange but highly affectionate people, Vishvaratha unlearns the race hatred which kept the Aryans and Dasyus apart. He even begins to entertain affection for the simple, honest folk whom his Guru, Agastya, had taught him to hate. His heart easily goes out to all that was good and weak.

Ruksa, of course, lets himself go. He likes these dark maidens who never deny him anything. He also loves their wine and their ways which know few restraints. And the dark High Priest of the dread deity, Ugrakala. Bhairava looks upon these happenings with stern, silent displeasure more as ominous signs of his people's collapse in the war than anything else.

Vishvaratha's loving nature can resist Ugra no longer. At a wild sensual call from Ugra, he flings his pride to the winds and accepts the girl whose simple-hearted devotion has already earned his affection.

II

SHAMBARA KANYA (The Daughter of Shambara)—A Play

After a great victory Shambara comes to meet his people and propitiate his guardian god in his native fortress. He also brings with him Lopamudra, whom he has taken prisoner but whom he looks upon as his friend and the friend of his people.

Lopamudra, majestic, divinely fair and divinely tall, wise beyond her years, and endowed with a sympathetic understanding carries with her a magic atmosphere of strength and inspiration. She chides Shambara for having kidnapped her; for, she knows that, in spite of their disapproval of her ways, the Aryas love her and would be stirred to irrepressible hostility

at the news of her capture. Shambara only laughs at her fears; he is too powerful for the Aryas.

Vishvaratha meets Lopamudra, who brings with her the aroma of high souled Aryan life. He also remembers his childish fancy for the girl who is now so glorious a woman and so wise a sage. He feels ashamed at the life he is leading here. "Yes" he tells Shambara, "I eat; I drink; I sleep. Ugra has made me a bond slave. All this is no doubt true. But I am confined here like cattle. I pine away for my Bharatas, my brave tribesman. And you have taken away from me even the privilege of dying in the field of battle at the call of gods." He is now home-sick and Ugra is scarcely welcome to him as before.

Ugra also acquires an instinctive hatred towards Lopamudra. To her, this Arya woman whom her Vishvaratha adores is the symbol of the tragedy coming into her life and a reminder of the world to which he belongs and in which she, dark-skinned Ugra, has no place. In Lopamudra's company Vishvaratha finds an inspiration, which Ugra can neither give nor share.

Ruksha is typically happy. He sheds penitant tears for his serious lapses before Lopamudra and drowns his repentence at night in orgies of drink and lust.

Ruksha (wiping his tears with his fists): Venerable Mother, I can keep everything, but not self-control. All the gods have conspired against me. None of them even hears my prayers. The more I pray the more incongruous becomes the force of temptation. I am really not an Arya at all. (Looking piteously at Lopamudra he sheds tears).

Lopamudra: What is the use of saying like this? Why won't you save yourself?

Ruksha: Venerable Mother, (sobbing) essentially I am not a bad man—I assure you (smiling at once). The gods themselves have sent you here. Since you have come, the fire of mighty resolves is burning bright in my heart. (Two Dasyu girls from behind Lopamudra signal to him). Avaunt, you shameless—

(Lopamudra turns round but the Dasyu girls hide themselves behind a tree).

Ruksha: There is some one. I don't know where these new girls spring from day after day. When they do, my heart seems overwhelmed. (The Dasyu girls call him by gestures) Avaunt, you shameless wenches (Lopamudra turns round, the girls hide again). No, there is none there. But on this wretched noseless race, I spit with contempt. I abjure them for ever—I promise you. I am a great sinner. Venerable Mother, I am a great sinner.

Lopamudra: But, child, what's the use of talking. Since I have come, I have found you drunk.

Ruksha: Mother, I myself feel it is too bad. Oh! What am I? A Trutsu, the pupil of Agastya. And I remain dead drunk thus! Ruksha, fie on you, (sobbing). But what can I do? Have mercy on me (crying). I am a good man, but this fortress full of demons, these dark, shameless women, this prison: when I see them, my breath fails me. I become miserable. I, the beloved pupil of Agastya, shall I drown my misery in wine? What a lot is yours? Fie, Ruksha! How have you fallen (Looks at the sky)."

And wise Lopamudra sighs at the war which is destroying her own people and the people whom she loves. Reports of Shámbara's defeat reach the fort, and Bhairava, the High Priest of the dread Ugrakala, makes up his mind that the god demands the sacrifice of these three—Lopamudra, Vishvaratha and Ruksha. He sows the seed of suspicion and distrust among the Dasyus. Portents are heard and seen; and it is decided to offer them as sacrifice to the dread Ugrakala.

These three human offerings are tied to the stone pillars which surround the open-to-the-sky shrine of Ugrakala.

And thus they talk, waiting for the sunrise which was to bring them death.

Vishvaratha: We shall not die—No. Never. God Varuna himself has spoken to me words of comfort. I see with my eyes—Aryas—yes, I see them—the conquerors of the world, crossing streams and mountains—subjugating Dasyus—shouting "Victory for Indra" in every direction. Joy is in their eyes; in their heart is inspiration; the world is at their feet.

And, on the point of death, Vishvaratha pours out his feelings for Lopamudra.

"Why are you created so wonderful? Seeing you I have had new eyes. Mother, you are like a goddess, resplendant. When you speak, the gods speak through your voice. When you walk, from your footmarks flow the streams of noble purity."

Ugra learns that her lover is going to be sacrificed to the deity at sunrise. There is no struggle in her simple heart between her attachment to her father and her race and her love for her lover. By a path known to a few, she steals out of the fort and informs Divodasa and the sage Agastya of the awful lot which impends Vishvaratha. Back through the same path, she brings the enemies of her people into the fortress.

Agastya, with the Trutsu and Bharata warriors, arrives just in time to save Vishvaratha and others from being burnt alive. They are set free. The fort is captured. In the confusion of the moment Bhairava, the High Priest, alone disappears. Shambara, wounded and on the point of death curses his daughter:

"Wicked girl, you brought my foes into the fort to save your lover? For him, you destroyed your parents and your race."

Agastya: Shambara, even on the threshold of death you lack grace.

Shambara (with clenched teeth): Go where you will, wench; go and dance on the dead bodies of your father and mother, of your brothers, of your people.

Ugra (crying piteously): Father, no, no (sobs).

Lopamudra (with affection): Shambara, what are you doing?

Shambara (raising his head): The snakes of Pashupati will poison you in every limb. Disgrace of your family, go and sit in the lap of your lover. Wherever your name is heard, there shall upspring flames of destruction.

When Shambara dies, Agastya offers a prayer to the gods and calls Vishvaratha to surrender Ugra. Frightened she clings to Vishvaratha. Agastya orders his pupil to hand the Dasyu girl to him.

Vishvaratha (with a frightened glance): Gurudev, Shambara's daughter is mine; you shall not touch her.

Agastya (in anger): Child, do not be a fool. Those who hate the gods shall not live. Leave her to me.

Ugra (trembling): I am alone; I am yours; leave me not, Vishvaratha.

Vishvaratha (to Ugra): Ugra, be quiet, (to Agastya) Gurudev! (he steps in front of Ugra) Do you want to snatch Shambara's daughter from me? (looks menacingly at others).

Agastya (coming near): Remove yourself.

Vishvaratha (to his tribesmen): Pratardana, my brave Bharatas, Shambara's daughter is my queen; I have sworn so by all the gods. If you let a hair of her head be touched, the curses of our ancestors shall be on you.

Pratardana (stepping near Ugra): As Your Majesty pleases.

Agastya: Are you mad?

Vishvaratha (in a frightening attitude): Gurudev! I cannot touch you. But you can take my wife. Shambara's daughter saved it from Ugrakala. Anger Incarnate! Before you kill this helpless girl, kill me. Take my life. I am the lover of Shambara's daughter. I am not fit to live. Kill me. (looks at Agastya with steady eyes).

Agastya (with burning anger, raises his weapon): You dare to oppose me?

Lopamudra (stepping between Vishvaratha and Agastya): What are you doing, Agastya? Your fury is not quenched even by this poor girl's tears. (She looks at Agastya. Agastya stops, hesitates; their glances meet like a clash of swords).

Lopamudra: Are you bent on killing both your son and wife with one stroke?

Agastya (angrily): Even *you* coming in my way?

Lopamudra: Yes, I also.

(Agastya's hand, which held the sword, slowly falls by his side).

The curtain falls.

III

DEVE DIDHELI (Given by the Gods) —A PLAY.

The drama opens in Trutsugrama, the capital of Divodasa, where the victorious army of the Trutsus and the Bharatas has returned with spoils. Lopamudra also comes here with it. For the first time, she lives among people to whom Agastya's word has been law. She moves among them as a goddess of flaming

beauty, winning hearts and spreading heretical views about racial differences, intervening on behalf of the vanquished Dasyus. Many young men of the town are in love with Lopamudra and want to follow her to her hermitage as her pupils. Vishvaratha the beloved disciple of Agastya, is now her favourite disciple too. He desires to marry the hated Shambara's daughter according to Arya rites. He proclaims boldly that an Arya is not born but is made by temperament and training and that Ugra is more Arya than most Arya women.

Agastya in the hour of his life's triumph when the hated Shambara is no more, feels his universe crashing over his head. The woman, whose name could not even be spoken in his presence, is in the midst of his people, uttering heresies, bringing men and women to her feet. The one pupil, whom he had looked upon as a worthy heir of his learning and might, was again hers, insisting upon a marriage which to him was a sin of all sins.

Agastya then swears a fearful oath. If Vishvaratha does not surrender Ugra, he, Agastya, the greatest of Arya Sages, would yield up his life. And Vishvaratha swears another fearful oath. If he cannot marry Ugra, he would no longer live; for his life's mission would have gone.

The wise Lopamudra knows and admires both these two obstinate men, master and pupil. Agastya, in the full prime of manhood, was a mighty man whose greatness had breathed unforgotten melodies on the chords of her heart. Vishvaratha she loved more than a son.

Rohini, Agastya's lovely daughter, is also heartbroken. Before Vishvaratha was kidnapped by Dasyus, she had loved Vishvaratha. Then she was betrothed to Sudasa, the prince of Trutsus. Now she wants to get the betrothal broken and marry her beloved Vishvaratha.

Dear Old Ruksha, drinks profusely, tells tall stories of his heroic deeds performed when in Shambara's fort, and claims to be the beloved pupil of Lopamudra.

In this situation Lopamudra decides to save both the men whom she loves, and meets Agastya. She appeals to him to save Vishvaratha but in vain.

When he refuses to listen to her and treats her appeals contemptuously she definitely breaks through the armour of self-assurance with which Agastya is armed.

Lopamudra (stepping forward): Agastya, may I ask you one thing before you go?

Agastya: What is it?

Lopamudra: Why are you afraid to speak to me? Come, what have I done?

Agastya: Daughter of Bharadvaj! The whole world is dying to speak to you. Is it not enough?

Lopamudra (smilingly): Whom I want to speak to, does not speak with me. What do you dislike in me?

Agastya (looks with anger at her and then says slowly): I am afraid of you.

Lopamudra (with flashing eyes): Are you afraid of losing your heart?

Agastya (with contempt): No. I am afraid of disappointing you.

Lopamudra (with enthusiasm): Agastya! The fear is all mine. So far, wherever I have gone, men have given me their hearts. I have accepted them without paying any price. Today I am prepared to pay the price, but you will not give me your heart. Why are you so cruel?

Agastya: You are bold.

Lopamudra: When an equal comes your way the first time, you always find him bold.

Agastya (contemptuously): How can I be your equal?

Lopamudra: Equals are born; they are not made.

Agastya: Have we not talked enough?

Lopamudra: No. I have given up my vows. I am no longer content with accepting love; I want to win it.

Agastya: Then shall I tell you the truth? Your efforts will be fruitless.

Lopamudra (smiling with triumph): No. I have not been blind these two months, (with emphasis) No, by all means.

Agastya (contemptuously): What can I say to a great sage like you?

Lopamudra (with smiling eyes): You will say it when time comes. I am leaving for my ashram now. I have but one prayer to offer. May the gods give you greater strength, and to your heart sweetness. (She looks down, smiles, collects her skirt and leaves).

Agastya (looks after her like a mad man. Then he knits his brows and as if his heart is torn): Shameless!

Rohini, Agastya's daughter, is miserable. When her betrothal with Sudasa is broken and she is free to marry her Vishvaratha, a situation arises in which she must lose either her father or her lover.

When Rohini informs Vishvaratha of her freedom to marry him, he cries in anguish—

> I was dying for the day when you would be free to marry me. But today, how dare I ask you to be a co-wife of Urga—Shambara's daughter?

She tells him that he owes no obligation to a dark woman. Vishvaratha cannot accept the idea.

> Vishvaratha: Rohini, the gods have a different mandate for me. In my heart, through my voice, echo these words, (in an inspired tone) God Varuna has told me "No form, no colour can determine an Arya. (In prophetic tones) those who ask you to leave Ugra are non-Aryans; they seek the distinctions of colour or birth. Burn them up for the colour of Shambara's daughter; and a million Shambaras besmeared with your ashes, will become Aryas and keep alive the flame of my worship."

Rohini meets Lopamudra and breaks down:

> Venerable! Of all men, two men alone are my links to life. One of the two or perhaps both will die, and what binds me to life will snap." Lopamudra gives her the solace. "Child, I am like you. What will happen to me if one of them dies?" She adds with determination. "Rohini, dry your tears. Neither of them will die—if I am alive. Rest assured. Let us see, whether they kill us both or we save them both."

Vishvamitra is already a *Rishi* in the making. He can commune with the gods; and he asks them again and again why Ugra was not an Arya?

He invokes the god Surya who gives him the *Gayatri,* the famous *mantra,* and with its aid, the gods accept Ugra as an Arya woman.

Poor Ugra, princess born, is miserable beyond words. She is in a strange world, among a strange, arrogant people. Her people are dead or enslaved. She only lives in and for Vishvaratha. But she feels in her heart that he is not what he was before Lopamudra came to the fort. With her childlike outlook she considers that woman as her greatest enemy and invokes the aid of the Moon and the *Pipul* tree in pathetic words to make her Vishvaratha smile:

"Moon, Father mine, tell me what ails him. For three days now he has not smiled. My eyes are thirsty for his smiles. Moon! Won't you tell me where his smile is gone? (wipes a tear) Oh! I am so miserable. I have no home; no father, no people. Vishvaratha alone is my all. If you do not let him be with me where will I go? (Thoughtfully) is he offended with me? Does he dislike me? Has some one stolen his heart? Oh, what shall I do? (She sits on the steps of the *Pipul* tree and offers her respects.) *Pipul!* my God! Every one has left me. You are my only refuge (coaxingly) Vishvaratha may say that you are not a god. But my mother said so, so did my nurse, and they worshipped you. I shudder at the gods Vishvaratha worships. But my *Pipul*, won't you come to my rescue? I shall wash your basin clean, offer saffron and rice to you. When my Vishvaratha smiles again, I shall weave a garland of flowers to you.

"*Pipul!* My protector! You know the whole thing, don't you? He came to my father's fort. I called him. He came. I stood lifeless like a tree. Then he smiled. I came to live in his eyes—and I was alive again.

"Father *Pipul!* his mind wavered only when that white woman came. She is clever and she stole his heart. Her tongue has a magic, more dangerous than the tongue of Bhairava. Give me back his smile, which she stole away. Father! I am at your feet.

Vishvaratha says that I am not an Arya. Let him say so. What he says must be right. (With emotion) but *Pipul!* I will always worship you. Show me where his smile is hid. My father's foes have enmeshed me, and his smile is all my world. Make him happy. Keep him happy, and keep him by my side. I shall be at his feet, his slave."

Lopamudra ultimately stakes everything on the last throw. She appeals to Agastya to give up his decision and let Vishvaratha marry Shambara's daughter.

Agastya: "Daughter of Bharadvaja! (decisively) Why do you try to persuade me? My vow will remain unshaken even if the sun stands still. If Vishvaratha has respect for his master, loves the lore of *Rishis*, and cares for my life—there is but one way. He must surrender Shambara's daughter.

Lopamudra: These are not the words of Agastya, the wise seer. Here the High Priest only speaks, in egotism lost.

King Divodasa (shocked): Lopamudra, what are you saying?

Lopamudra: Something which the sage has never heard before, what he badly needs to hear.

Agastya (with contempt): I am listening. But it is difficult for you to realise the difference between an Arya and one who is not.

Lopamudra: Best of Sages, between Arya and Anarya, between the white and the dark, between the high and low, you—a seer—can see no difference. (In a trembling voice) Steadfast as you are in learning and in strength, come with me; far away to forests, where the hungry and the unhappy await their redemption. Come with me; leave your pride here; give up this priesthood of the Aryas. Come with me. We shall sit under the same tree; we shall share the same dear skin; and what the gods have left undone, we shall accomplish.

Agastya (fascinated and humble): Daughter of Bharadvaja, I am best as I am.

Lopamudra: You cannot but accept my invitation. If not now, some other day. But let me at least take away Ugra.

Agastya: You want to give her back to Vishvaratha.

Lopamudra: Have you no faith in me, yet?

Agastya: What is your object in this?

Lopamudra (in a voice full of emotion): My object? Do you want to know it? Then I will tell you the truth. By King Divodasa and Mother Sarasvati, I swear. But do not blame me, if your pride is broken to bits. Two men only are dear to me as life itself.

Divodasa: What!

Lopamudra: King, do you remember that you wanted me to marry; that was years ago.

Lopamudra: Today, I know a man whom I want to marry. I know another who is more to me than a son. Both have gone mad. Each of them wants to destroy the other or to die. But I swear by all my ancestors that if I am alive neither of them shall do what he wants.

Divodasa blesses her, and with tears in his eyes leaves them. Agastya also wants to go and asks for permission.

Lopamudra: Then I ask you to wait. Agastya, why do you flee from me? Why dam the life-giving stream of love? (Agastya looks the other way) Won't you speak with me? Am I not worth looking at?

Agastya (looks at her like a drowning man): Worth-looking at! For two months past, I have heard nothing but the appreciation of your worth.

Lopamudra (in jest): Is it so?

Agastya: Every one, young and old, was ready to fight for you when you were taken a prisoner. Richika and Divodasa, whenever they see you, feel the energy of younger days. The dying Shambara, when he looked at you became love-mad. Sages, unable to control themselves in your presence, hid themselves. My own daughter worships you like a goddess! Daughter of Bharadvaja, does not every one yearn to hear the music of your footfall?

Lopamudra: And yet (placing a finger on Agastya's breast) not a chord has stirred in this heart. (sighs) Who lives in my heart, does not even let me live even in his eyes.

Agastya: You are right, for, I have not lost my strength. Leave me alone. You can make others mad if you like.

Lopamudra (humbly): Why do you speak like this?

Agastya: (with contempt) I see the fall of the Aryas in your irresponsible ways.

Lopamudra (with equal contempt): But Agastya will never be a complete Arya till he accepts me. I know you now these two months. Leave your pride and ask your own heart. It will tell you so. (beseechingly). Why don't you listen to it?

Agastya (with hands crossed on his breast): Why do you lose your self-control? When the morning comes and you leave us, all that will be left with you will be the sorrow that you should have spoken thus.

Lopamudra: Then I pray to Surya to stand still in its course; and let this night be long, of slow moving moments only. (with folden hands) Agastya, forget your pride and your intrigues.* I want you as the child wants its mother. Come!

Agastya (bits his lips, steps aside and speaks harshly): Woman! Are you mad! You tempt me at this age? Who are you?

(For a moment Lopamudra draws back; then with a shake of her head, she throws modesty aside).

Lopamudra: Who am I? (in triumphant tone and with love-lit eyes) Agastya, you have observed the laws eternal. With an impetuous heart you have maintained stern self-discipline! Darling of the Gods, by the splendour of your genius you have overshadowed the mighty thrones. Why not then ask your own heart? If you love truth, tell me—me, who I am?

Agastya: Who are you? In you there are both heaven and hell. In you live gods and demons and all (He looks at her as one mad and then speaks unsteadily) I hear the sighs of endless lovers still unfaded in your ears. I hear the fetters which your lips have fastened on many. (shuddering) From every pore of yours drips sensuality. You are voluptuousness itself, which always tempts but never tires.

Lopamudra: (sadly) Proud men! Why do you discover your own sensuality in me? I am devoted to those who love me. I am the poetry of my poets. (with anguish) But I had no idea that you thought me but a wanton. Have you finished? I will now tell you once—and for the last time—who I am. Vain man! Go and wander over all the three worlds, but you will never find a mate like me. (Beseechingly) Why are you so blind? (slowly) Who am I? Can't you even recognise Vishvaratha? Don't you see your and my lines in his thoughts and deeds and in his wide-seeing visions? Agastya, his vision and his inspiration are your creations and mine. If you are not too blind to see what a man we have shaped, why do you waste this our joint creative art?

(She sobs and sits down on the steps):

(Agastya looks like one gone dazed. She looks at Agastya piteously. Agastya covers his eyes with his hands.)

Agastya (opens his eyes and coming near): I am caught in your net like a bird. Thou image of sensuality.

Lopamudra: Agastya, I have given you everything. I shall listen to whatever you say. But in this life, you are my only god. Come—come with me.

Agastya (unsteadily): No, no, never.

Lopamudra (sadly): Will it be said that Lopamudra loved but only one man and he would not have her? No, Mother Sarasvati, it is impossible. Bear me witness. (slowly and with determination) Agastya, you are cold, now, but your heart is flaming like molten gold. You leave me now; but you will come and follow me. You do not accept my heart, but you shall return with the offer of your heart. You do not give me your love; but you will beg it of me at midnight.

* * *

Ugra, Shambara's daughter, is delivered of a son. Lopamudra, who anticipates a civil war if such a son survives, has him exchanged for the dead child of Ajirgarta, one of Agastya's pupils.

She then goes to bid goodbye to Vishvaratha and assures him that she will induce Agastya to accept Shambara's daughter as an Arya at any cost.

Vishvaratha: If my Guru blesses me I will never let you go. Who but you will inspire me? Who will lead me from darkness unto light.

Lopamudra: Son, I must wander where I would. Your memory of me will inspire you more than my words. Vishvaratha, wherever I may be I shall always be yours—always your Mother.

Then she gives him a parting message:

"Let not the lure of thrones be with you. Gone are all emperors, Manu and Yayati. Where are their sceptres? And their thrones, where are they? The sky-kissing towers they raised, where are they? They performed great exploits, but in darkness wandering what did they grasp but darkness?"

It is midnight. She goes to the place where she expects Agastya. Agastya has now decided to die, for Vishvaratha has declined to change his resolve. But he cannot resist the temptation of having a last look at Lopamudra and comes to the spot.

Lopamudra: It is midnight, and yet he is not come? Won't he come? (Thoughtfully) Sylvan goddesses! To-day I cannot invite you by my flute. I cannot welcome you with my dance; my feet refuse to move. (sighs) Won't he come? (in anguish) Flowering groves, why are you so fragrant? Birds, why do you swing on the branches, as you sleep? Waves, why do you dance as you go by with such ecstasy? Agastya heeds me not—and my heart is getting hope-bereft.

Agastya (stepping forward and in disgust): "Awful beauty? Are you a woman? A demoness? A goddess? Who are you?

Lopamudra (with joy): He is come—my Agastya!

Agastya: Yes, I have come to see how you behave. Do I hate you or myself?

Lopamudra (humbly): Why Agastya? Do not speak thus; your love has brought you to me.

Agastya (shuddering): I now understand why you are so fascinating.

Lopamudra (prayerfully): Agastya, the melodies I have heard are sweet; but still sweeter are the melodies I have yet to hear. (comes near and places her hand on Agastya's shoulders) Let me hear them. Here I am. I wait as if my soul were in my eye—one pointed.

Agastya: Lopamudra! Why do you harass me? Your lips, like bows well drawn, pierce me. Your words remove the difference between good and evil.

Lopamudra: Agastya, why do you burn yourself and set fire to me? Don't you see my plight? Once I loved to be alone. In this my father's home, Sarasvati was then my only companion. She sang; I played my flute. Both of us sang in unison and my limbs were like fleeing waves. My hair blew high like spray of water; my hands and feet flung themselves high and low; and the tide of joy was on me. The birds played the tune; and I danced.

Agastya (looking at her dazed): Lopamudra, you are wonderful.

Lopamudra: No, I am not. All that is gone. My song and smile and dance have withered away without you. Love has reduced me to ashes. I am thirsty—thirsty for your lips, for your arms.

Agastya (closing his eyes): Image of light divine! You are making me blind. Demoness, Goddess, best of *Rishis,* whatever you are, I fall at your feet. Free me—let me go. I cannot bear this pain and anguish.

Lopamudra: Then, my lord, why do you suffer them? (opening her arms) Give me the nectar of life. Accept me as your forefathers accepted their consorts.

Agastya (unable to maintain self-control): Do you speak the truth? Or, are you a wanton wanting to enslave me?

Lopamudra: Distrustful! Do you doubt me still? When I see you, every grave becomes a paradise of flowers; every tree shines with dewy gems; on every pathway glistens the footprints of gods, and the breezes of their land whistle in my heart.

Agastya (comes near and stops abruptly): But, but what will Vasishtha say? And the Bharatas? they will say that you enslaved me as you did the rest.

Lopamudra: If you do not dare to accept me for fear of the world, there is none so blind as you. (with pain) Love is the great, eternal law. And if you cannot see in that light—then—O Best among the ascetics, leave me.

Agastya: What will you do?

Lopamudra: I? (sits on a stone, with tears) I shall live on the memory of the love-torn Agastya as I saw him tonight. I will wander farther and farther, away from the Aryas, with your name on my lips. And years hence, when the burning anguish of my heart shall have but left only the ashes, memories,—I shall, come and live in this grove again. (Agastya comes near. She speaks with sobs). Then your memories shall be like the stars on a quiet night and with their mild sweet light they will illumine the depths of my heart. I shall sing but alone; and in those songs I shall pour out the desolation of my heart; and they will be songs as the Sun never heard before. (Breaks down) With lips hungry for your kisses, with arms impatient for yours, I, I will wend my weary way to the land of Death (covers her face with her hands).

Agastya: Lopamudra! (she does not look up).

Lopamudra: (sobbing) Go.

Agastya: Look up. My blood is on fire. (Slowly places his hand on her head). My heart is caught in your soft hair.

Lopamudra: Don't get caught, I pray you. You know how to command, not to beg. You know power, not love. It has not been given you to taste the joy which comes of complete surrender. (covers her face with her hands).

Agastya (touches her cheek): Lopamudra, what Spring created these petals of rose? What god gave you

the glory of your youth? Look, I have drunk in your words and I am more thirsty than ever. Look at me. (lifts her head) Agastya surrenders. I want to follow you, like unto the dust flying from under your feet.

Lopamudra (with half-closed eyes): Lord, my eyes, full of dreams, are blinded by your splendour. We are alone. Only the sky overspreads us; we are clothed in moonbeams. (closes her eyes) Take me away to distant solitudes to forest glades across mountains and rivers. Look —look—at that star. It is like the essence of your splendour. It will show us the way. We shall teach crags and sands to sing—to sing—the songs of our love.

Then Lopamudra begs of him a boon. Vishvaratha was their child in spirit. He should be allowed to live.

Suddenly Agastya remembers his vow and draws back saying:

"Darling mine, awake from your dreams. Our paths must run apart. If my life is falsehood, I have no right to live."

But before he goes, Bhairava, the High Priest of Ugrakal, who had disappeared from Shambara's fort when the Aryans entered it, suddenly steps forward from the darkness and stabs Lopamudra, who sinks to the ground. Bhairava then attacks Agastya.

At this juncture Vishvaratha comes from behind and catches hold of Bhairava. Rohini comes and informs them that someone has stabbed Ugra to death.

Bhairava laughs gleefully. "I killed her—her who betrayed Ugrakala. Here is another. And here the third—" and he flings himself on Vishvaratha. Vishvaratha throws him down and kills him with his own knife. He dies with the name of his Ugrakala on his lips.

Agastya lifts the wounded Lopamudra in his arms. Divodasa and the sage Vashishtha enter. Lopamudra opens her eyes, sees Agastya, and with both hands clings to him in embrace.

Vashistha (sternly): Brother, what's this?

Agastya (overpowered with emotion): Vasishtha, she is mine. The gods gave her to me.

The curtain falls.

IV

VISHVAMITRA RISHI:—A PLAY

The Dasyus are kept as prisoners in a field fenced round—a concentration camp—and guarded.

In Trutsugrama, naturally, the atmosphere is tense. The victorious Arya army consists of Trutsus whose king is Divodasa and the warlike Bharata whose ruler is young Vishvaratha. Sudasa, Divodasa's son, jealous of Vishvamitra's fame and prowess, sows seeds of hostility between the allied tribesman. Vasishtha, Agastya's brother, a stern sage who stands for unalloyed racial purity, hates Lopamudra, dislikes Vishvaratha, considers the acceptance of Ugra by him as a sin, and on account of his brother's marriage with the heretical Lopamudra, leaves with his pupils from a place where Aryan life cannot be lived in its prestine purity.

The Trutsus treat the slaves brutally. Vishvaratha wants his Bharatas to resist this cruel treatment. A civil war is the result.

Agastya and Lopamudra want to leave Aryavarta for the South. Vishvaratha's soul is tortured. He wants Trutsus and Bharatas to be friends. He wants to allay the jealousy of Sudasa. The gods show him the way. He goes to a mountain top where he communes with the gods and his ancestors. Under their inspiration he decides to give up his throne and become a Rishi.

Agastya gives up his office as a High Priest, and Vishvaratha, as Vishvamitra Rishi, is invited to take his place. This sacrifice saves the Trutsus and the Bharatas from a fatricidal war.

V

LOPAMUDRA—A NOVEL

The next part begins after about twenty years. Vishvamitra for seventeen years, has been the High Priest of the allied tribes, Trutsus and the Bharatas. He was now accepted by many as the greatest of Aryan *Rishis.*

Jamadagni, the Bhrugu sage, has also his ashram in Trutsugrama where learning and martial arts are cultivated.

Sudasa has kept his irrepressible jealousy under severe control and has so far seen no way of shaking of Vishvaratha's headship of the Trutsus and the Bharatas which though spiritual in name is equally temporal. In Trutsugrama, Aryas and Dasyus live a life in which Dasyus serve powerful Aryas and Aryas associate freely with Dasyu princes, principal among whom is Bheda, son of Shambara and brother of Ugra. Vishvamitra has provided Bheda with small principality; but he was brought up in Trutsugrama. He lives there a gay life, riding fine horses and treating Aryas lavishly. Many Aryas live on him generously, hate him in their hearts and suffer him on account of the great Vishvamitra who had made Trutsugrama practically the capital of Aryavarta.

Sudasa has no children. The next in succession is a cousin, Krushashva, son of Haryashva, married to Shashiyashi, daughter of King Somaka. Bhed carries on a secret love affair with her.

Every one knew about it. But none cared to confess that he knew. And following Shashiyashi several Aryan women had taken Dasyus as husbands as lovers.

Lomaharshini, the younger sister of Sudasa, an impressionable slip of a girl, was fifteen years of age. She lived freely like a boy and doted on Rama, several years her junior. Rama was the fourth son of Jamadagni, the Bhrugu sage. This boy, a big-sized and supple-limbed, handsome as a god, was from his birth claimed jealously by his mother, Renuka; by Loma who lived with him day and night; and by old Kavi, generally called Vruddha, the master of the martial art of old Richika. This old man, gaunt and stern, the commander of the allied forces of Trutsus, Bharatas and Bhrugus, insisted on bringing up Rama in the tradition of the older Bhrugus. He held his present chief, Jamadagni, who had forsworn arms, in silent contempt.

Though nominally a king, Sudasa's life is one long frustration which the proximity of the great Vishvamitra has brought. The latter no doubt has made Trutsu-Bharatas the strongest power in Aryavarta. But now he wanted to be a ruler in his own right.

The only way to get rid of Vishvamitra is to get Vasishtha to accept the office of High Priest. But Vasishtha with his pupils, had gone to the forest years ago and had established a hermitage which had come to be a great centre of high learning and stern self-discipline. Sudasa had invited him to come back again and again but the sage had refused for the gods with whom he communed daily had not sanctioned the step.

II

Sudasa now goes to him again and begs him to come back. Vasishtha, steadfast in his outlook on Aryan purity, promises to ask the advice of the gods only if Sudasa issues ordinances prohibiting all promiscuous intercourse between Aryas and Dasyus and sanctioning the destruction of all Dasyus who carried on with Arya women.

Sudasa returns to Trutsugrama and issues the ordinances. In order to prepare for the anticipated war with the Bharatas, he also decides to marry his sister Loma to Arjuna, styled the Warrior with Thoustand Arms, whose sway extends over countries south of Aryavarta and even upto the jungle settlement on the Narmada. His capital was called Mahishmati and was situate on the banks of that river (near modern Broach). But Loma makes uproarious fun of the proposal and when kind Sudasa slaps her, her perpetual companion, little Rama of fearless strength, charges him with his head lowered like a wild bull. People either loved him or feared him, there was no middle course with him.

The edicts are issued. Arya boys in a body go about killing Dasyus, husbands and lovers of Arya women, destroying the houses of Dasyus. They also find out the place where Bheda met Shashiyashi surreptitiously.

But the old commander Vruddha comes to know of this intended raid. He goes to the rendezvous, warns the lovers and asks Bheda to leave for his capital with his followers. He also brings Shashiyashi to the palace. When the raid is made Bheda is not to be found and Shashiyashi is safely in the royal palace. Sudasa's queen then goes to the hermitage of Vasishtha to pay her respects. She is accompanied by Shashiyashi. Vasishtha

silent and modest, sits gazing into the sacrificial fire waiting for the mandate from the gods. He meets the Queen and her party and comes to the bank of the river to see them off in a boat.

On a hill nearby stands Bheda with his party, rushing post-haste to his capital to escape the wrath of the Trutsus.

He sees his beloved but a few yards away in the company of Vasishtha and the Queen and cannot restrain himself. He gallops down the hill, snatches Shashiyashi upon the saddle, and before people realise what has happened, he disappears with her in a cloud of dust.

Bheda had committed a sacrilege according to the cannons of Arya life. He had drawn arms and kidnapped a woman in a hermitage and in the presence of the noblest *Rishi* in Aryavarta.

Vasishtha, at that moment, receives the message of god Varuna. Aryavarta must be purged of this dreadful sin.

He accepts, not the priesthood of the Trutsus, but the High Priesthood of all Aryans. He returns to Trutsugrama to launch a crusade against the dire sin which demanded swift expiation.

> "My sons", he tells his disciples, "go and announce in all the ashrams of Vasishtha: the gods have given me to-day the priesthood of all Aryavarta to destroy non-Aryas and to rescue Aryas. I have pledged my word. Destroy Bheda and purify the land. Boatman, take me to Trutsugrama."

III

Little Rama was a prodigy. His mother called him "God Varuna". Loma would not live a minute without him. Old Vruddha, the great general, tried to teach him every art he knew, the art of archery, of breeding horses, and using and making arms.

His son, Vimad, is appointed as the special tutor for Rama. The little boy speaks little, carries himself like a young lion and is the centre of fierce love and fierce dislike.

When Rama is nine, Jamadagni, the Sage, learned and wise, decides to send him to school at Vishvamitra's hermitage, famed as the greatest seat of learning in Aryavarta. Vruddha is adamant. Three sons, he says, Jamadagni has turned into

men of learning. Now, fourth son, was his, to be trained into a warrior like unto his mighty ancestors Shukra, Chyavana and Richika. The old man refuses to part with Rama but Jamadagni is firm in his decision to make a *Rishi* out of his son.

In his wrath Vruddha leaves his chief's hermitage without a word for Bhrugugrama, the original settlement of the Bhrugus. If Rama is taken away from him, he will no longer obey the chief of his tribe and will go into retirement. Little Rama's mind is, however, working differently. His Vruddha has gone away. He will, however, not remain away from him. At night he steals away from his mother's side, brings out his little horse and rides forth in the dark night to meet Vruddha, through dense jungles, without knowing the way. Rama has a unique gift: he can see in the darkness and is incapable of fear. He rides the whole night.

In the morning he gets down to wash his pony and to have his bath, and is captured by a party of Dasyus going on a pilgrimage. They tie him to a horse and beat him for his resistance. The party then goes up a mountain for several days and rests at night in front of the peak on which a shrine is situate. At night there is a feast; and Rama tied with ropes, sees his beloved pony killed, cooked and eaten by the party.

When the party is asleep, in silent, concentrated wrath Rama pulls himself to the fire and frees his hands by burning a part of the knot which binds them. Then he gets free, and slowly crawls upto the peak, where the dreaded Ugrākala stood amidst heaps of decaying bones of sacrificial victims.

Fearless, he tries to find a way, but on three sides the peak sloped down perpendicularly into a ravine.

His absence is soon detected by the party which comes up the hill in search of him. Rama goes over the precipice and suspends himself in mid air by holding on to the roots of a tree. Then grasping one tree after another, he slowly lowers himself into the ravine and plunges into the torrent.

The next day he is picked up by a boat belonging to a family of Panis who carry on a small trade by selling sundry wares up and down the river Sarasvati. Incidentally the Panis, also carry on the business of stealing good-looking boys

and selling them. Rama along with two other boys is locked up in a box made in the hull of the boat.

Shunashepa, one of his companions, older to him by a few years, is a very handsome boy. Rama takes to him immediately and learns from him that the Panis intend selling them.

The boys are kept for watch on the boat at night and locked up in the box at night. When Rama tells Shunashepa who he is, the other boy stands away and is in tears. When asked to explain, he takes a promise from Rama that he will not forsake him even if after he knows who he is. Rama promises. Shunashepa then tells him that he is the son of a *patita,* accursed Bhrugu, a member of the clan of which Jamadagni, Rama's father, is the head. Shunashepa narrates his story thus:

> My father is Ajigarat, a Bhrugu by birth. The sage Agastya has laid him under a curse; he is a fallen, a *patita;* and we cannot stay in any Arya settlement. If we do, we are mercilessly beaten and driven off.
>
> But before my father became 'accursed' he was a learned man. Now he is addicted to every vice. But when he is dead drunk, he chants the most beautiful *mantras.* When I came to understand what he chanted I grew restless; an urge to acquire learning and be a *Rishi* took possession of me. My brothers were dull; and my mother's hope of some day getting Agastya to lift the curse came to be centred in me."
>
> Once, for days, we had nothing to eat; wherever we went people drove us away. We had to live on the birds that we hunted. And if we had no food to eat, how could we get wine for my father? And as we had no wine, I could not learn anything more, and my father began to beat us all.
>
> Once my father beat me almost to death. Then he sold me to a party of Panis and bought wine in exchange. The Panis carried me away in their boat.
>
> My father was my teacher. Without him I went almost crazy. I therefore cried incessantly, and the annoyed Panis beat me. Tired of this life, I ventured to invoke God Varuna, even though for an accursed like me, it was a sin. The Panis, hearing me chant the *mantras,* grew merciful and set me free.

My father, so long as the stock of wine lasted, chanted the *mantras* and I learnt them at his feet. I was happy beyond dreams.

When the stock of wine was over, my difficulties began. Without any opportunity to acquire further learning, I became miserable. Then my mother and brothers discovered a way by which I came to complete my education. They sold me to a new Pani for a stock of wine. Then they hid it from my father. I lived with the Panis for a day or two as before. Then I chanted the *mantras*. The Panis afraid of the gods molesting them, let me go. I then came back to my mother. She made my father drink.

And I resumed my studies. Thus have I studied time after time.

"In a few years", he added, "I will complete my education. I will then go to the great Agastya and get him to remove his curse. I will live in a *Rishi's* hermitage and complete my education."

Shunashepa is in tears when he concludes his story. Rama, with his direct simplicity, does not understand how such a fine boy has to sell himself again and again to learn what is a free gift in his father's hermitage, to remove the curse when he himself became a *Rishi*. The boat of the Panis wends its leisurely way down the holy Sarasvati. But one day they find the old Pani looking at Rama significantly, Shunashepa also hears them chuckling at, having got hold of the son of a great man. It appears that the Panis want to take the boat back so that the old Pani can go alone and strike a bargain for the great man's son.

Rama and Shunashepa steal away from the boat, when the Pani, his wife and sons are making merry at a feast. Rama, whose sight can pierce darkness, takes Shunashepa by the hand through the jungle.

They part near a settlement for Shunashepa dare not come near it. And Rama impatient to meet Vruddha takes the forest path to Bhrugugrama.

In Bhrugugrama the old warrior Vruddha is pining away for his Rama. He had learnt that Rama had left his father to come to him, but had not been heard of since. The Bhrugus under his direction, had scoured the forests for days in search of him but he was not to be found. Vruddha was broken-

He spoke with none. Only sometimes tears welled up in the old warrior's eyes, and he cried out for Rama in the anguish of his disconsolate heart.

One night he is walking alone on the banks of the Sarasvati lost in grave despair. Suddenly he hears a voice, coming from the forest "Vruddha, Vruddha",—the beloved voice, *his* voice—but in pain and anguish, intercepted by the angry growl of a wolf. Vruddha rushes into the forest. He hears the stifled groans of the wolf and the sinking, broken voice of his beloved Rama. He runs to where the voice comes from. There the wolf lies dead. Rama is lying in a dead faint, bleeding. In a life and death struggle, the nine years old boy, bleeding from every limb, had strangled the wolf to death.

IV

The gods were cruel to Vishvamitra, the noblest *Rishi* in all Aryavarta.

In twenty years he had revolutionised the sacrificial lore of the Aryas. Human sacrifices had been given up. Now the sacrificial fire which brought the gods to men, was, due to the teachings of the sage, a source of inspiration. And Vishvamitra, the great *Rishi,* the mighty Bharat, now presided over sacrifices, which were rituals of purity.

King Harishchandra propitiated the God Varuna and secured the boon of a son, but on a fearful condition.

The son, great God had demanded, had to be offered in sacrifice when he grew up. Harishchandra had parleyed with the God and killed time. Now his son, Rohita was growing into fine manhood and the father had no heart to offer him as a votive offering. But the god was angry and wanted the plighted word to be kept. In punishment for the breach of promise, Harishchandra was visited by a fell disease. Either he must give up his son, or give up his life—such was the edict of the all-seeing Varuna, the mightiest of the gods.

In distress, Harishchandra sought the intervention of Vishvamitra, the master of the sacrificial lore. If human sacrifice was a sin, as the sage had taught, how could the great God

Varuna insist upon it? If it was not, Vishvamitra had been teaching Aryans a false doctrine.

Vishvamitra saw the force of it and took up the challenge of Varuna to demand human sacrifice.

> "Gods", he asked the gods, "Are my teachings untrue? If so, I cannot live. If they were true, how can you demand the sacrifice of Rohita?"

Vishvamitra, with Jamadagni, the Bharat chiefs and other kings who looked to him as their High Priest, came to Harishchandra's capital and began the sacrificial session. The sage prayed to the gods. "Was his life's mission true or false?" He asked the gods again and again. And the only reply was that king Harishchandra grew worse. God Varuna wanted a human sacrifice, that was clear.

Ultimately the God relents. He would accept a substitute for Rohita. In consequence, the news goes round far and wide that king Harishchandra wanted a boy for the price of a hundred cows to be offered as sacrifice in place of Rohita.

Ajigarta, the accursed, wandering in out-of-the-way places heard the news. He also heard that Vishvamitra was the presiding *Rishi* at the sacrifice. And he smiled with malice. Now is his chance to get rich and also to escape from Agastya's curse. He comes to king Harishchandra's capital with his family and sells Shunashepa for a hundred cows for being offered in sacrifice as a substitute for Rohita.

Vishvamitra has made up his mind, as he tells Jamadagni and his wife Rohini, that he will defy the God, stand up for the truth as he sees it, and end his life before a human sacrifice was performed and his life's work undone.

But no one can be found to tie Shunashepa to the sacrificial post. Strangely his father Ajigarta is ready to do it for a fee of another hundred cows.

To Vishvamitra, frustrated of his life's mission and preparing to vindicate his mission by his own self invited sacrifice, comes the wretched Ajigarta and tells his story.

He was Agastya's pupil, Vishvamitra's own tutor. When he was young, Lopamudra had ordered him to substitute his

own dead child for Ugra's son, for she was afraid that Vishvamitra's son by a Dasyu wife would lead to a civil war among the Bharatas. Ajigarta had stolen the son, but had refused to hand him over to Lopamudra. On that Agastya, the sage, had cursed him and he had lost his status.

Ajigarta had brought up the boy. It was Shunashepa. And he offered to Vishvamitra that if he was provided with two thousand cows and an ashrama and if the curse on him was raised he would refuse to tie Shunashepa to the sacrificial post or to kill him and thus save the boy and Vishvamitra's reputation.

The sage is angry. He refuses to be blackmailed and drives the blackguard away. While going Ajigarta threatens the sage that he will disclose the parentage of Shunashepa the next day.

But later a conflict tears the sage's heart. If he discloses Shunashepa's identity there cannot be a sacrifice, for he is the son of a Dasyu woman and the god will not save Harishchandra. His life's mission will fail and the proud Bharatas will feel disgraced. A civil war will follow. He will lose his office and his primacy among the Aryan sages. He will fall and the nobility of Arya life which he has built up will fall with him. If on the other hand he does not disclose who Shunashepa is, he will be sacrificed but he himself will retain his high position, his followers and his work.

The sage struggles with his soul and triumphs in the end. He decides to stand by truth and disclose the identity of Shunashepa and invite civil war and his ignominious fall.

> "There is only one way to sacrifice a man. An ascetic can offer himself up. The sacrificial fire can only be of his own truth. He must embrace the flame of fearlessness."

Vishvamitra sees all this clearly. With head erect, he looks on all sides. He destroys the serpent of Fear. He stands on its dead body as the god Indra had done before him. He challenges the gods.

> "If you want to enforce untruth, you may. But Vishvamitra will stand by his truth. He will not move from his position whatever may happen."

He looks up. In indescribable splendour he sees Lopamudra looking down upon him—no, no, Mother Sarasvati, the source of all knowledge and strength. She encompassed the heavens, uplifting the universe with moonlit waves of grace and beauty.

Next day, at the sacrificial ritual, a wonderful thing happens. Shunashepa is tied by Ajigarta to the post; but as the final *mantras* are being recited, he sees coming towards him Rama, his boyhood friend, now a godlike youth. He had lived all these years in the happy memory of the friend whom he believed to be the God Varuna. And now he comes in flesh and blood to save him. Out of sheer joy, he sings fresh *mantras*, beautifully divine. The assembly is awe-struck at such a miracle. The bonds which bind Shunashepa to the sacrificial post, fall off, and, as he falls, Vishvamitra takes him up in his arms. And lo, and behold, the God vindicated Vishvamitra's mission. Harishchandra sighs, opens his eyes, and shows signs of recovery!

V

Vishvamitra had a unique triumph but it brought no peace to him. His wife, Rohini, is furious that the son of the Dasyu Princess Ugra is alive and being the elder is likely to wrest the kingship of the Bharatas from her son. The Bharatas are unhappy and dissatisfied. And soon comes the news of Visishtha's edicts, of Bheda's abduction of Shashiyashi, and of Vasishtha's re-entry into the political arena to rouse Aryavarta against Bheda and destroy him.

The sage smiles at his difficulties and at the world by which he is surrounded. If an Arya kidnaps a woman he can be forgiven but not a Dasyu. If Shunashepa, a glorious little *Rishi*, had been a son of an Arya mother he would have been worshipped; the colour of his mother's skin made him a thing to be looked down upon and crushed.

Vishvamitra feels that his world is at war with his mission. He feels his place with his own Truth and not with the work. He seats Rohini's son Devadatta on the throne of the Bharatas,

gives up his office as the High Priest to Trutsu and Bharatas and, at night, unknown to everyone, goes into the forest to live his Truth. Shunashepa, who alone of others, worships Vishvamitra, follows him.

VI

When Vishvamitra is busy with the sacrificial session in Harishchandra's capital, Sudasa is preparing for battle. He invites Arjuna of the Thousand Arms, of Mahishmati, to come to Aryavarta with his savage warriors. He comes, ready to marry Loma and destroy anyone who dares to disagree with him. But he hates the very atmosphere of Aryavarta. There are too many *Rishis,* too many rules of conduct to suit him. Impatiently he comes half-way to meet Loma, who had come with Rama to Harishchandra's sacrifice. On the way Arjuna comes across the party which is accompanying Renuka, Rama and Loma and captures them.

The capture of a *Rishi's* wife and son brings the indignant Bharatas and Bhrugus to their rescue. A fight ensues, and anxious to avoid a disaster, Arjuna escapes to Trutsugrama. But in doing so he brings back Rama and Loma whom, however, he has not recognised as his bride-to-be.

When he returns to Trutsugrama, Vasishtha sternly rebukes Arjuna for going on raids and capturing Renuka in defiance of the unalterable law of the Aryans which enjoins that learning and those who pursue it are inviolable. Jamadagni is angry and issues a spiritual edict that Loma shall not be married to Arjuna. Baffled, Arjuna wants to go back to his wild native country. But on learning that Loma is not a *Rishi's* daughter but King Sudasa's sister, his bride-to-be, he tries to molest her. Fiercely does the loyal Rama, though a boy, attack the redoubtable Arjuna. Arjuna, forgetting the fact that Rama is the son of Jamadagni and his High Priest by right, tries to strangle the boy. Bhadrashrenya, his commander-in-chief, uncle and the feudatory chief of the Yadava tribe of Saurashtra, intervenes and saves Rama.

Arjuna is furious and orders that they should all leave Aryavarta at once and bring away Loma with them. He then

starts in advance. Rama though injured, insists on coming with Loma. Bhadrashrenya, the old feudatory, is glad that Richika's grandson wants to come back to Saurashtra of his own sweet will and lift the curse which weighed heavily on his people. He takes Rama and Loma with him. But he is no longer their captor. His heart has surrendered to the little High Priest whom he is taking back to his land.

And thus the scene shifts from the Punjab to Gujarat.

Vasishtha, however, is unbending and inspires a crusade against Bheda. "The protection of Aryan purity, the destruction of non-Aryan wickedness" becomes his mission for the moment.

PART VI

BHAGWAN PARASHURAM (Lord Rama of the Battle-axe) (A Novel)

I

Under the shadow of Girnara (in Kathiawar) lives the Yadava tribe over which Bhadrashrenya rules. It is a small and poor tribe. Its greatness is only due to the fact that its chief, Bhadrashrenya, is the uncle of Arjuna, the Emperor, his guardian when he was a boy, and his right-hand man and the commander of his forces.

On his way back to his domains Arjuna learns that Ravana has invaded his territories to the south of Narmada. He straightway leaves for Mahishmati, his capital. But he is unforgiving to Bhadrashrenya and removes the old man from the post of commander and directs him to hold Rama and Loma as prisoners till his return from war.

Fierce Arjuna spends his time in endless wars. But his empire is administered by Bhadrashrenya, his uncle and commander; his loyal mistress, Mruga, who once was a prostitute; and Mrukunda his high priest. Mrukunda is a Bhrugu—for the family of priests cannot be changed—who was once an ignorant cabin boy of a ship. Arjuna's grandfather, Mahishmat, elevated him to the dignity of a high priest, when Richika, the Bhrugu sage, left his tribe priestless, and no decent Bhrugu came for-

ward to accept the office of the high priest to an "accursed ruler". Mrukunda knows state-craft but nothing about learning and rituals. His disciple Kukshi is the high priest of the Yadavas and also incidentally a spy and agent of Mrukunda.

The Yadava tribe is miserable. This year the rains have failed them. The rivers are running dry. There is no water. The scorching sun takes his toll of cattle and children. To this tribe, Bhadrashrenya brings Rama, a boy of fifteen now, with blazing eyes and sealed lips, tall, well-built, trained in the arts of the Bhrugus, the warrior-priests. He moves aloof and superior, divinely calm. With him is Loma, small and shapely, dressed like a boy and adept in all the art in which men excel, Rama's inseparable, living in and for him. Bhadrashrenya introduces them to his tribesmen and hopes to improve their fortunes by the presence of the grandson of the unforgotten *Rishi* who had left them because of their sins.

Rama, though young is a self-contained dynamo. Fear is unknown to him. With the concentrated rapidity of lightning he flings himself into any situation which he feels requires his intervention and enforces submission.

Next day, he chastises Madhu, the son of King Bhadrashrenya, a bully, and some years his senior. Soon he evokes loyalty and inspires fear. Pratip, Bhadrashrenya's elder son becomes his devoted follower. Kudshi, the high priest, now coming to know that Bhadrashrenya is in disgrace with the Emperor Arjuna, wants to create difficulties for him. He attributes the shortage of water to Rama's inauspicious presence and fosters a revolt in the tribe. Bhadrashrenya is firm and declines to leave the place, his faith in Rama unshaken.

Rama's mind works in mysterious ways. He is Jamadagni's son; he is a *Rishi*. What does God Varuna mean by withholding rains?

He goes up the Girnar, invokes God Varuna, and rain descends in torrents, allaying the thirst of the Yadavas.

Rama aided by Loma, Pratip and a band of loyal workers organises the boys of the tribe. He teaches them horse-breeding and the use of arms, for he was brought up by Vruddha, the

master of the martial art. He lays down strict canons of conduct and imposes stern punishment on the derilect.

A woman runs away with a lover; Rama brings them back and ties them to a tree to remain, for days, the laughing stock of the whole tribe. His boys, armed and trained, go about imposing order on the highways, making trading parties secure and obtaining in return horses and more horses. He invents new weapons; his favourite instrument being the battle-axe. He stops the nefarious man-hunt of the dwarfish *nagas* by punishing the men who carry on the trade of catching them for sale. He is an elemental force. When he finds the aborigines maltreated and their women molested, he makes them his pupils and plans his ashrama in their midst.

When the high priest's wife, madly in love with him, invites him to her bed, he horsewhips her.

Loma is a woman; Rama is a growing boy. She loves him; he takes her for granted. This little woman feels lonely and disconsolate, for Rama knows not the way of lovers. But when she sees the high-priest's wife making love to Rama she cries her heart out.

But the wild rapture which Rama sees in Kalvini's eyes suddenly awakens him to the fact that Loma is his wife or ought to be.

> "Loma, that wicked Kalvini called me to her house on a false pretext."
>
> "And then?" Loma's heart beat fast.
>
> "She stood before me without clothes, ready to embrace me."
>
> "Oh!"
>
> "I took the whip and slashed at her breasts and hips. Now she will carry the scars for some days."
>
> Loma embraced Rama and asked: "What did you do?"
>
> Her heart sang: 'My Rama, Rama."
>
> "If she hadn't been Kukshi's wife, I would have killed her. If such women are alive, how can Dharma flourish?"
>
> Loma was silent.
>
> "Loma"—
>
> "Yes, Rama?"

"I saw one thing to day—clear as light, what I had never seen before."

"What was it" and her heart beat again fast.

"You are my wife, as Arundhati was Vasishtha's, as Lopamudra was Agastya's."

"What do you say?"

Loma went mad with joy.

"You rejected Bruhadratha. You rejected Arjuna. You must not reject me now."

Loma did not know whether to cry or to laugh. Tears of joy came to her eyes and she embraced him:

My Rama! Shall I cry or laugh? Who say, I want to reject you? Who told you I would say no to you?"

Rama—so curiously made up—looked at her seriously. "I now see that you are my wife," he said and hid his head with the lion's mane in her breast.

Loma was silent. Rama passed his hand on her breasts, on her body, so softly as if she would be hurt.

The silence of the woods awoke to life. She felt as if she was made of life-giving flames. Rama's eyes with the silvery lustre of a thousand moons, filled hers with nectar. For a moment they stood still. Heart beat to heart and eyes swam into eyes!

II

Under Rama's direction, the Yadavas grow in power and wealth. Life becomes more orderly and clean. Then the high priest, Kukshi, under orders from Mahishmati, starts a conspiracy to kill Bhadrashrenya with the assistance of Sharyats, a neighbouring tribe, and instal his younger son Madhu as the ruler of the Yadavas.

Rama anticipates all these moves. Before the day named for the attack, he flings himself with his trained band on the settlement of the Sharyats. His orders are strict. No adult is to be spared; the women and cattle alone have to be brought back to the settlement of the Yadavas.

The Sharyats are destroyed; their women and children, carts and cattle only are brought to the Yadavas. No more are the

two tribes to war with each other. No more are they to indulge in incessant quarrels and murders. There is now only one tribe and Bhadrashrenya is its king.

The thorough ruthlessness of this conquest reaches the ears of Mruga, Arjuna's mistress, who rules his empire in his absence at Mahishmati on the distant banks of the Narmada. She invites Rama, Loma and Bhadrashrenya to come and visit her There is no refusing the invitation.

Rama asks Pratipa to take the Yadavas to the territory of his father-in-law. He senses that the wrath of Mruga would mean the destruction of the Yadavas if they continued to live in Saurashtra.

III

The news that Richika's grandson, Rama of the Battle-axe. the high priest of the Haihaya tribe by right, is coming, spreads like wild fire in Mahishmati and the people are thrilled with delight.

Rama puts up with Mrukunda, the psuedo high priest, in the temple of Pashupati on the banks of the Narmada.

To him comes Mruga the mistress of Arjuna and his savage and blood-thirsty tribes. She is curious to see the boy who has performed miracles, destroyed ancient tribes, and made men love and fear him passionately. She sees the eyes of flame. the silent lips of strength, the face with godlike calm. She hears words of affectionate understanding which stir unfamiliar chords in her heart. Her all-too-powerful sensuality is set ablaze by the smile which thrills her heart and the sinewy perfection of well-knit limbs. She is fascinated by Rama. She invites him to dinner. When he comes to her fearlessly, trusting her as a father would a daughter, leaving even his inseparable battle-axe at the door step, a feeling unfamiliar to a woman seizes her. He praises her statesmanship. He tells her of her dreams of wanting to extend Arjuna's empire from the Indus to Ceylon. He assures her that he wants the same thing, only he wants it to be supported by Dharma, the eternal law

of the gods. If she will trust him and join hands with him, he will help her to realise her imperial dreams and from the Indus to Ceylon will be heard the chant of *Rishis,* invoking the great gods. And Arjuna should, he adds, honour the woman who has made him and his glory, with a legitimate share of his life before the sacred marital fire.

Mruga, who wanted to conquer, remains a willing slave. Her ambition is roused, which now appears easy to realise—if only this man of far-seeing vision can be by her side. And she feels the injustice of it all. She has given all to Arjuna, body and soul and conscience and statesmanship. For him she has slaved poisoned and murdered, planned and conspired. And is she not entitled to be his wife?

Anupadesha now worships this new Gurudeva. Men and women from far-off places come to him to get but a look of his face, a touch of his feet, and his silent blessing.

In a few days Rama becomes a formidable centre of power and inspiration. And Loma, adored of her lord and adoring him, joins the feats of arms of the Bhrugus and becomes the Mother, the human link between the distant, dread god and the humble worshipper.

But Mruga is unforgiving to Bhadrashrenya. Rama guessed her intentions, and sends him away to safety with Pratipa who is awaiting them on the banks of the Mahi with the Yadavas.

The Sharyata prince, Jyamagha, who alone has escaped the massacre that fateful night when all Sharyata adults had been put to death, has vowed to kill Rama, now universally the Gurudeva, the Master and comes at night to kill him.

In the guise of an Aghori, Jyamagha with knife in hand, comes crowling. He is but a few cubits away. Behind the sacrificial fire, his foe is sitting, as if asleep.

Suddenly, two fearful eyes open. Streams of light comes out from them. Seeing two points of brilliant light, Jyamagha lies motionless.

> "Is it Jyamagha?" comes the voice, soft and soft. Jyamagha shudders. "Jyamagha, have you come to avenge your father and your tribe? Come, kill me. I will not stop you." Jyamagha trembles. "What will you gain

by killing me? Why not come with me? We shall lead all these people from darkness unto light. I did not kill your father for a selfish end, nor your tribesmen out of malice. If you have no faith in me, come quick and kill me."

"Jyamagha, I want to make Arya Dharma free from fear—from the Indus to Ceylon. I want Arya tribes to serve learning and strength. Come, come with me. Your place is with me, come. And if you have no faith in me, come and kill me. Here is my breast."

The knife falls from Jyamagha's hands. The fearful eyes become attractive, the voice kindly, like a mother's caress. His threat is stifled with tears. He somehow finds his legs and runs,—runs for his life!

IV

Arjuna, victorious in his wars with Ravana, starts for his capital. On his way back he hears of the events which have taken place in his capital; of Rama's exploits in Saurashtra; of his arrival in Mahishmati; of his people's love for him; of his mighty influence over them. Arjuna is furious with rage. He comes back determined to destroy this enemy who had escaped death at his hands more than once.

Arjuna of the Thousand Arms comes to Mahishmati and sees Gurudeva Rama, the man of fearless vision, who sees men and things as none before him had seen. He meets Mruga. In an admiring mood she tells him of her dream to build an empire for him with Rama's aid and wants marriage in place of concubinage as her reward for a life's service. Arjuna flies into a brutish rage. He strikes Mruga; orders the massacre of the Bhrugus; and directs that Rama be brought to him for being done to death.

Mruga conveys Arjuna's intention to Rama. But he is adamant. He will not flee. He sends away Loma with the Bhrugus. He is Arjuna's Guru, and none will dare touch him. He promises Loma that he will rejoin her if need arises.

Rama, fettered with ropes, stands before Arjuna of the Thousand Arms, unmoved, with godlike calm. He tells the raging monarch; "Arjuna, be wise and control yourself. I

have come to show you the path to greatness. You control your subjects by fear; I can make them loyal by love. You can fight; I can give you the strength of peace. You love darkness; I can give you the light of knowledge. Leave this power of barbaric might. I can give power, which Dharma protects."

Arjuna raises his hand to kill Rama. But Rama raises his voice with prophetic strength.

> "I came to save you; you have refused my offer. Go down to perdition—where even the vilest of mortals dare not go."

A fear seizes Arjuna's heart. The sword falls from the soldier's hands. His new commander stands as once Bhadrashrenya stood, to stop him from touching Rama.

Rama stands firm, his eyes blazing with fire. Arjuna feels uncertain of himself and desists from killing Rama.

Rama is then put in a cell, where Mruga and Arjuna's new commander come and beg of him to go away. Rama leaves the palace within sight of Arjuna and his generals.

Rama leaves by a boat provided by Mrukunda, hoping to reach Chandratirtha and then join Loma. On the southern bank of the Rewa, in the inaccessible forest, opposite Chandratirtha, live the dread Aghoris, who live on raw flesh and the marrow of the brain and who on dark nights gather where men are cremated.

When the boat reaches Chandratirtha, one of the boatmen, bores a hole in the bottom and the boat sinks. Rama recognises the boatman who sinks the boat. He is Jyamagha, the last survivor of the Shariyata tribe he had destroyed. Rama plunges into the river and begins to swim towards the Aghori forest. Jyamagha follows him trying to kill him. Rama reaches the bank first; Jyamagha as he comes to the bank sees an open-mouthed crocodile dashing after him. Rama flings his battle-axe in the jaws of the monster, who disappears in the waters, trailing a stream of blood behind. Jyamagha who has come to kill Rama, remains to be saved by him. However, before he

can thank his saviour, ghoulish screams resound in the forest. Aghoris, with weapons of animal ribs, come out and capture them.

Finding that there is no trace of Rama, Loma comes disguised as a boy to Mrukund, accompanied by Vimad, Vruddha's son and Rama's loyal tutor. She wants to find out what has happened to Rama. Somehow, she contacts Mruga, who tells her of the boat having been sunk and Rama having been seen landing on the bank where no human being can put his feet and remain alive.

Loma, however, has a faith in her lord; he cannot die. So she decides to contact the Chief of the Aghoris. This Chief was the dread Daddanatha, whom people heard of, but never saw. He could, said the report, fly in the air and walk on the waters. His fondness for human blood was attested by the presence of a corpse, whose head had been severed by nails, and whose veins had been drawn dry of blood.

Living in hiding in a lonely house in Mahishmati, Loma makes friends with those who claim to know the fearful rites of the Aghoris and masters them. With Rama's name on her lips and his living presence before her eyes, she performs those horrifying rituals at midnight in places where dead bodies are cremated.

She now learns that Guru Daddanatha comes only once to the cremation ground near Pashupati's temple on the dark night of every month in late hours. Then he makes an offering of the skull of a freshly killed human being. On the appropriate day, therefore, Loma makes the ritualistic signs and places offering in that cremation ground and climbs a tree to see the coming of Daddanatha, whom none has seen before. A little after night she hears the lapping of the waves and sees a giant cat coming out of the river and running up the bank. The huge cat, with a lion's mane, kills a man by his nails, sucks his blood and then standing on two legs offers the skull to Pashupati.

Loma finds it difficult to contact this fearful Daddanatha. No one will accompany her when she wants to go where Daddanatha comes from. Finally she induces two or three staunch warriors to come with her but they faint at the dread sight.

And she herself all but fainted when she saw Daddanatha feeding a pet crocodile and slipping away swiftly, standing on the waves of the Narmada.

But now her hopes burn bright. Fishermen bring her tales of a tall white man having been seen on the south bank of the river at Chandratirtha moving among the Aghoris. With the aid of one of Rama's devoted disciples she has it conveyed to Arjuna that Rama has been accepted as the Guru by the Aghoris. In consequence the angry emperor starts harassing the Aghoris in his city. Daddanatha retaliates. First a soldier is killed; then the son of Arjuna's commander; both by the characteristic method of the Guru, the head severed from the body by nails, and the blood sucked. Then mysterious signs of the Aghori rituals are found in Arjuna's palace night after night. They are found in the morning drawn even in front of the emperor's bed. Then one day his favouirte little image of god Pashupati, which he keeps under his pillow, disappears and Arjuna's nerves are shattered. Terrified by the traces of the invisible foe, whom he can never meet, he loses nerve, behaves brutally by day and shivers with fright by night.

Mruga comes to know that Loma has propitiated Daddanath and is working for Arjuna's destruction through him. She begs of Loma to intercede and save Arjuna. Truce is called between Daddanatha and Arjuna, who stops molesting the Aghoris and the reprisals cease.

But Arjuna feels mortified that he, the world conqueror, has been terrorised by this Aghori Chief. Truce is no truce for him. He wants to avenge himself on Daddanatha and plans to kill him on the next dark night when he comes to the temple of Pashupati for making his monthly offering of a human skull.

Loma has now propitiated Daddanatha, and on this very night she asks him whether a man has come to the Aghori forest a year and half ago. Highly pleased, Daddanatha tells her of the arrival of Bhargava Nath whom he has adopted as a son. Loma tells him that Bhargava is her husband and she wants to be taken to him. Daddanatha promises to take her to Aghori forest next time he comes.

Sahasrarjuna who has in the meantime concealed himself behind a rock rushes on Daddanatha, his mace upraised. Loma wounds him on the arm by her discus. Arjuna rushes at her. Daddanatha howls like a jackal, makes noises and gets on all fours. The swords of Arjuna and Loma clashes and Loma's sword falls at a distance. Daddanatha jumps on the back of Arjuna and his long-nailed fingers seek the throat of his victim. Arjuna exerts every muscle of his strong body to shake off the Aghori. The shrill cries of Daddanatha ring in his ears. Arjuna falls to the ground. Daddanatha's long nails had almost pierced his throat when Loma cried "Daddanatha, Master, don't kill him. I have promised his queen that I will not let him be killed."

Daddanatha slaps Arjuna ferociously till he becomes unconscious. Loma who has been wounded, faints. Daddanatha sees her falling. He comes back running and lifts her up.

Arjuna of the Thousand Arms recovers. He gets up, takes his sword from the ground, and rushes towards Daddanatha, who is standing in the river with Loma in his arms.

But he sees Daddanath flying up in the air; and the sword falls from his grip. Then Daddanatha is seen rushing backwards, standing on the waters of the Narmada, with Loma in his hands. Arjuna loses his senses and falls.

VI

In the land of Aghoris, Rama's fearless behaviour evokes admiration, and he is allowed to live on the promise that he would not leave the forest without Daddanatha's permission. With concentrated thoroughness, Rama turns to improve the lot of these filthy but curiously simple-hearted and honest race. He teaches them the art of the Atharvan *Rishis* to cure ailments. He also instils the sense of cleanliness and order in them. Daddanatha grows fond of him and adopts him as a son and teaches him the art in which he is skilled. But one thing Rama would not do. He would not feed the crocodiles, make friends with them and ride them in the river as Daddanatha used to do.

Marriage among the Aghoris was a matter of momentary joy; but Rama declines to accept this notion. He has a wife, who is his very self, and to the amazement of the Aghoris, he declines to marry the highest maiden in that forest.

One day, however, to the surprise of the Aghoris, Daddanatha comes as usual on a fast-moving crocodile, but with a girl in his hand. He comes and hands her over to Rama, and thus is Loma united to her lord.

Rama and Loma leave the land of Aghoris with Daddanatha's blessings. Arjuna has now decreed the death of every Yadava and Bhrugu and has summoned a large army to pursue Bhadrasenya and the Yadavas who are waiting in the forests on the river Mahi. Rama decides to join them and also leads them across the tractless forests and deserts of what is now known as Rajaputana, to the safety of Aryavarta.

On his way he stops at Mahishmati, where Mriga meets him in a small house on the outskirts which she maintains as a private retreat.

Mriga is now tired. Rama's contact has given her a sense of nobility and purity. She has become out of tune with her life as it was. Arjuna is getting more unsteady, more brutal, more reckless. She wants a last meeting with her saviour. Rama invites her to come with him to Aryavarta. But the proud Mriga declines. Sadly, she shakes her head and says:

> "Gurudeva, I cannot leave him (Arjuna). Wicked, ungrateful, cruel as he is, he is still woven into my life. Rama, I have never known parents. So far as my childish memories go, I have been dancing in the mire of men's lust. Old men, middle aged, young men, even children have like butterflies burnt themselves up in the fire that is me. But I am not a prostitute. Where I give, I give everything. I may be stifled myself, but like a creeper I cling closely; I do not live to get away."

Rama, the Bhrugu, looks at her affectionately. She continues:

> "I have given everything to Arjuna of the Thousand Arms, since he was fifteen. I have given him my youth, my fire, my strength. For him, I have practised statecraft and

killed his enemies or got them killed. He has thrashed me often. Twice he tried to poison me. It was easy to have killed him; it is even so today. But his irresponsible temper, his brutal, cruel look, his every muscle are a part of my life. Without him, I am like one dead. I have been the mistress of many but only for a momentary pleasure. But now to be his mistress is everything to me. How can I leave him?"

Rama invites her to come to his father's ashrama.

"No, No, No," she cries, "I will not come. I have no strength left. To come with you requires youth and ideals. Lord, forgive me. When I lose myself in a world of fancy, I see you as my lover. But, my god, I have no courage left." When Rama presses her to come, she frankly confesses:

"My God, tempt me not. I am not a fool. I am lost in love, but I am not blind. Once I had hoped to see new resplendant dreams in your company, to make even you see things which you have never seen. I wanted to melt your stony detachment by my flaming passion. But you are pure like the rising Sun. I am filth, emitting stench...

"I am still beautiful. My throat, and limbs are still shapely. My attraction is still undimmed. But stormy sensuality has made me lifeless. You have been pleased to look upon me as an elder sister ... But I know. I cannot be an elder sister. I will grow old. I will manage your ashrama. I shall bring up your children. I will serve the Bhrugus. But, my god," she continued with tears in her eyes, "I am not meant for such stale dignity. I can never be the queen of a god-like man like you. There is no place in your world for me and there is no place in my life for illusions. Here I grew, and here I must wither."

She asks but one boon that when she dies she must go to the world of his ancestors which he will join on death.

Rama sees that this woman, once a wanton has been saved. Before the sacred fire by the magic rituals of his ancestors, the Bhrugus, he adopts her as a daughter of the Bhrugus, the proud tribe of warrior priests and enjoins upon her the privilege of the tribe "Death to Dishonour."

Then Mriga bids goodbye to Rama and faces Arjuna at night. Fascinated by her beauty, he comes to her as usual. She repulses him. "I am a daughter of the Bhrugu," she says

"adopted by Rama of the Battle-Axe". Arjuna tries to catch her. She kills herself with the name of Rama upon her lips.

VII

Across untrodden forests and blazing deserts Rama leads the Yadavas and the Bhrugus fleeing for safety to distant Aryavarta. They brave the dangers of virgin forests, impassable swamps, inclement weather, lack of food or water, the ferocity of wild beasts and, more remorseless than all these, the pursuing fury of Arjuna's blood-thirsty tribes. Through these trials, Rama alone stands unruffled. He maintains the morale of men, women and children, who love him more than their life. He inspires those whose hearts are faint, with new confidence, cheering the dying moments of those who fall by the wayside. With "Jaya Gurudev" on their lips they die, cheerfully.

At last they reach the banks of the river Sarasvati. But before they cross it, the pursuers catch them up. Horses and men of both sides rush to ally their thirst in the river and fall on each other, mingling their blood with the sacred water of the mother of learning—"Sarasvati". At last Rama and a few hundred of the numerous tribesmen who had set out with him, cross the river and reach Aryavarta.

But terrible news await Rama in the land of his fond dreams. The bloody war between Sudasa and Vasishtha on the one side and Vishvamitra and the ten kings (styled in the Rig Veda as the Battle of Ten Kings) has passed into a bloodier phase. Many of the Bhrugus including two of his brothers, lose their lives in this long drawn-out war. But there was worse news still. His mother, Renuka, the noblest of women, has dared which no Bhrugu woman had done before. She had gone to live with the prince of Gandharvas. His father Jamadagni had gone mad, and the Bhrugus, the proudest of warrior-priests, were among the degraded of the earth.

Rama goes to his ancestral settlement, Bhrugugrama, and finds it deserted. He rushes to his father who, to him, was mighty among the great ones of the earth. But Jamadagni's

mind has collapsed. He is oppressed with the fixed idea that he has betrayed the mission of his life. His wife, Renuka, the mother of the Bhrugus, has left him to go and live with the Gandharvas. His sons have failed him and his ancestors by refusing to enforce swift retribution on the erring woman.

With dazed eyes, Jamadagni talks to Rama incoherently doubting even the paternity of Rama. Rama is stung to the quick. The law of the Bhrugus is stern. The erring wife must die. The father's word is a law of life. He himself has enforced it against other women. Now it is his mother, his beloved mother whose pet child he is. And his father's mandate was clear.

His face grows stern; his eyes are two blazing points of fire. And, as he came, so does he leave on his black horse, his battle-axe his only companion to vindicate the irrevocable law of the Bhrugus, the warrior-priests. He speeds to the distant mountains where the Gandharvas live. He meets his mother, whom he loves so well, but to whom he, the embodiment of Dharma, the law, must dispense swift justice.

> "Why have you concealed yourself here?" demands the stern son.
>
> Renuka replies: "The Lord of Bhrugus is great. He is a master of learning and of strength. I have violated my Dharma, I know. But he does not care to know why I did it. You are my loved child, and you also do not care. I have no fear of death. Since I first violated the law by disobeying my husband, I am dead to myself. I am waiting for the god of death. But he came for hundreds here not for me. You have come in his awful shape. Come darling, kill me. Save me from a sin which I have myself invited."

She offers her neck. Rama raises his battle-axe. Before he kills her, however, he asks one question:

> "What was the Dharma which tempted you—Mother, thou goddess of mercy?"

To explain her conduct, Renuka takes him to see the Gandharvas, up on the mountain top. She takes him through a gorge to a broken down village. As they pass through it, lepers

of both sexes and all ages cry out to Renuka "Mother, Mother". Renuka then takes her son to the Prince of the Gandharvas for whom she has left her lord and her people.

There Rama sees the Prince of the Gandharvas, a leper in the last stages of dissolution, welcoming the goddess of mercy with inarticulate noises.

"King of Gandharvas", Renuka says, "My son has come to meet me. I have brought him to see you." Rama now sees why his mother has served these wretched beings in preference to being the mother of the Bhrugus, the mighty warrior-priests. His heart is full. He flings his battle-axe away and covers his eyes with his hands and cries:

"Mother, Goddess of mercy. Forgive me, forgive me."

When they return, she says:

"Son, now you understand why I am waiting for death. Nothing but my death can remove the stigma on the Bhrugus and secure the triumph of Aryan greatness. If I have lived, it is because there is none to kill me. When these thirty persons will die, I will enter fire any way. But now you must do your duty."

Renuka cast an affectionate glance at her son's battle-axe.

"Mother, we will talk about it in the morning", says Rama quietly.

The next morning she finds Rama coolly washing his battle-axe in a stream. She wants him to kill her.

Rama invites her to come with him.

"No. I won't come. No one will listen to you. And infamy will poison your youthful life. You do not know our people."

Renuka says thus and stops awe-struck.

Rama's attitude changes. It is no longer her affectionate son but the mighty Everest, distant, changeless, eternal, with strength at once irresistible and measureless. His voice changes as he says:

"I shall declare the law; and the world shall listen. It will have no other choice."

Renuka stands frightened.

"Come, Rama, give the order."

"No", Renuka says with firmness, "what about my Gandharvas?"

"I have thought about them already. Not one of them is alive. I have cut the head of every one of them."

The mother is angry with the brutal son.

"Mother, goddess of mercy." Rama says in an inspiring voice. "Your tears are intended to strengthen the strong not to lengthen the last moments of the dying."

And he lifts his angry mother in his arms and carries her away on his horse.

VII

The mother and son wend their way through mountain passes. On the way they join a party of trading Panis, and as they proceed further news of a great battle fought in the vicinity reaches them. King Bheda has been killed in battle; Vishvamitra, the great prophet was also not to be found. Rama's elder brother has been killed.

King Sudasa has won the final round. Bheda's wife, for whom this war of years had been fought, has been recaptured. Vasishtha, the great sage, has vindicated the mission of his life. Aryavarta had been purged of a great sin.

Rama who saves the party of the Panis from molestation by the fleeing soldiers, presses it into his service and induces it to go to the battlefield. In the dead of night, he collects the dead bodies of the mighty who had fallen on the field or rescues several, including Vasishtha's grandson, the Sage Parashara.

Rama then meets Vasishtha, the great apostle of Aryan culture, and thus the future meets the past.

Rama and Vasishtha then perform the obsequial ceremonies of the dead heroes and meet Renuka who is nursing the wounded.

Vishvamitra's body is not found, and Vasishtha, now that his mission is performed, wants to find his life-long enemy and

rival in learning and stern self-discipline. For in his heart there is no malice. He has carried out the will of the gods and so had Vishvamitra, according to the light the gods had given him.

Ruksha, the uncouth friend of Vishvamitra, had been for years the high priest of the dark, Aryanised tribesmen of Bheda. He hated all strife; to him the highest end of life is to live happily.

But war comes to his doors and he sees his beloved friend Vishvamitra overwhelmed in battle.

Ruksha, the high-priest of Bheda, forgets his years and his heavy body. He rushes to the battle-field and lifts the body of Vishvamitra. In the confusion of the battle and in the oncoming dusk he carries his friend outside the arena of battle though he himself is pierced by some flying arrows.

Under the staggering weight of his dying friend, he takes the road to his own ashrama. He forgets everything except that his friend, whom he loved since the school days in Agastya's ashrama, has to be carried to his own place. He steps, he falls, he rises again, and lifts the beloved burden. Blinded by blood, his own and Vishvamitra's, he struggles on.

Ruksha makes an effort, but he cannot lift Vishvamitra. He tries again. He succeeds a little but the body slips from his hands. He tries again, and his mouth tastes saltish. He vomits, he feels that it is blood that he is throwing out. But he has to take Vishvamitra, his beloved friend to his ashrama. He lifts Vishvamitra again with all his ebbing strength. Yes, Vishvamitra is his beloved friend, his life itself. He used to carry him on his shoulders.

Ruksha goes forward; suddenly he feels that Vishvamitra is falling. And the mind of Ruksha, the sage, is filled with darkness.

Then Rama finds the spot where Vishvamitra lies lying. Vishvamitra is on his deathbed. He knows that when the Orion rises on the horizon he will die. He tells Rama:

"My royal line is extinguished. Devadatta is gone, his brothers are dead, poor miserable Rohini is no more. But this is the day of my triumph.

"Self-restraint and strength are great, but greater than these is the heroism of self-surrender. Gods gave me the opportunity to acqu're that heroism. I have not been vanquished. On this cracking Aryavarta, I have planted the banner of Unity. My death will be its crowning glory. My victory is in my death. All the tribes are now one, by blood and in culture."

Then Vasishtha comes to meet his life-long rival.

Vasishtha who has just won the great war blesses the younger Vishvamitra and apologises for having intercepted his life's work. Vishvamitra answers:

"Great ascetic, you have not put obstacle in my way. I am what I am, because of you. If there had been no Vasishtha, I would have remained Vishvaratha. In emulation of you I acquired learning and self-discipline. As you were a high priest, I left a throne and became a high priests. You were master of the lore of the *mantras;* in emulation I became a master of the sacrificial lore. You saw races and their distinction; to extract the poison of your creed I accepted the challenge of this great war. You are the sky-kissing mountain. I grew strong only in climbing the peaks of your exploits."

"Best of *Rishis*", Vasishtha replies, "the gods have given us power to see, but we saw different truths. Who knows what secret is hid in this divergence? If I had not resisted your truth, where would I have been? But I am sad, I am so much older than you. I should have gone to the land of our ancestors instead of you."

To him Vishvamitra replies:

"Mighty ascetic, I am not sorry. I have accomplished my life-work. The gods have given me success which I never dreamt of. Best of ascetics, the god Surya has left no wish of mine unfulfilled. By his grace, I removed the difference between Arya and Dasyu, made an Arya of Shambar's daughter, made Aryahood accessible to all men. I made the lore of Vishvamitra as profound as that of the Vasishtha. My son, Shunashepa, is the heir of my learning, developing it to greater depth. Wherever the *Gayatri* is uttered, there the spirit of Vishvamitra shall live."

And thus speaking on his life-work the noble Vishvamitra grew incoherent.

"Come, he uttered, gasping for breath, I take you to the resplendant path of leading to godhood beyond—there beyond anger and malice. Let no one weep over his weakness. God Varuna has opened the portals of heaven. Come . . . higher . . . still higher." and the voice grew faint.

His breath came short. He muttered—

"Jamadagni, the Orion has risen." He then threw back his head. Rama caught the falling body in his arms, and tears fell from the eyes of Vasishtha, the best of Sages.

Having performed the obsequial ceremonies of the mighty dead, Rama proceeds to fulfil his plighted word to his father and his ancestors. He takes his mother to be killed at the very feet of his father.

Rama comes on his thundering horse, his mother in his arms. Every one was aghast at what was happening. Rama, the great Master, whose fame has caught the imagination of all Aryavarta wants to kill his mother at his father's command and then put an end to himself for killing his mother.

He goes to his father Jamadagni, the chief of the warrior priests of Bhrugus whose mind has but one fixed idea, to see Renuka his wife, killed. Rama places Renuka at his father's feet, who commands that her head be severed from her body.

"Yes father", says Rama and adds. "Mother, Mother, Goddess of mercy, I obey my father's mandate." And in his voice is sweetness and measureless love.

"Son", says she, "here is my neck. I have always prayed for death at your hands, dear."

"Rama", says Jamadagni, "Among us, the elected wife of the head of a tribe has never been known to have lived with another man. No one has heard even of such a thing. But this I saw, in my own family, in my own house. I must now for the last time—uphold the law and maintain the purity of Arya life. Many a time I have severed the heads of faithless wives; now it is my duty and the last one."

Rama's face is red with anger. "Father, I also perform my duty as a son—for the last time."

Jamadagni feels surprised. But Rama continues, "I shall kill mother. I shall accept the mandate of the father. But I refuse to join the land of my forefathers. I shall

go with my mother. I cannot save Arya greatness with disobeying my father or by killing my mother. And even if I can, I do not want to live."

And then, the mighty Rama, usually silent, upbraided his father.

"You have never heard truth spoken. I have eyes. You have none. If you had, you would not have thought that *Amba*, serving the dying lepers, was living in adultery. You were blind. You could not see that sin is not in the act, but in the intention."

Renuka, though crying, intervened: "Keep silent, Rama. You are talking uselessly."

"Why should I remain silent? In the false pride of Aryan greatness, you have destroyed Arya ideals. You are still destroying it."

Renuka is furious. She slaps Rama, as if he is a child.

"Son! you insult your father! Fall at his feet. Ask his forgiveness."

Rama stands, proud like a lion, looking with concentrated wrath.

"Rama, leave your pride", says Renuka, and in his mother's voice, Rama feels the might of irresistible love. His eyes become clear. "Son" it is my command—the last one. Cut my head off."

Rama falls at his father's feet, angrily, involuntarily. Renuka understands him. She places her hand on his back affectionately.

"Not in this proud way. You are the protector of Dharma. The head of the son must always be on the feet of the father."

Rama yields and apologises to the father. Jamadagni's mind has become clear. The sight of his long lost wife and the shock of his son's trenchent condemnation has brought him to realise the situation. And when Rama lifts his battle-axe, he cries,

"Renuka, Renuka, I got you killed. Your son has revived you. Rama, throw the battle-axe away. I withdraw my command Renuka."

He lifts her as she falls at his feet, and tears are in every eye.

Sudasa is now the emperor of Aryavarta; Visishtha, its father and spiritual guide. And a great festival of victory is held.

In the meantime, Loma rescues the widow of Bheda from the palace of Sudasa, where she had been kept pending her purification and re-acceptance by her former husband. And Rama establishes her infant son in a principality which his pupils had carved out of the forests on the south of Aryavarta.

Rama rejects the offer of Vasishtha that he should succeed him in the office of High Priest to Sudasa.

He then organises his Bhrugus as the warrior-priests pledged to protect the ashrams, the home of learning, to curb the vagaries of rulers, and to render the highways safe.

But meanwhile, Arjuna has learnt of the escape of Rama and puts forward a gigantic effort to invade Aryavarta and to destroy Rama and all the Aryan tribes. He collects a large force and marches on Aryavarta blazing a trail of burning villages, dying men and raped women.

Incidentally, Parashara the grandson of Vasishtha who has come to hate violence, appeals to kings not to resist the irresistible Arjuna, but his voice is that of one crying in the wilderness.

Rama instructs his followers to withdraw to the north to concentrate their forces. Arjuna, when he reaches Aryavarta, finds the settlement of Aryavarta deserted. He proceeds to the ashrama of Vasishtha. He has his grudge against this venerable sage, who once had the temerity to lay down the law for him. He finds the ashrama deserted; but the sage alone has refused to depart and alone, in his spiritual strength, he has decided to face the great destroyer.

> "Vasishtha, sage", shouts Arjuna insolently. The age goes on making his offerings to the sacrificial fire. None of the six old men about him looked up . . .
>
> "Stop, don't you know me?" Arjuna roars. Vasishtha gives the offerings and looks up. "I know you from childhood," he answers coolly.
>
> "Not that way, man. But I have come as the destroyer of Aryavarta," adds Arjuna.

The sage does not reply. "You once tried to teach me the ways of Aryavarta. Now you will have to live according to my way" Arjuna shouts.

"Vasishtha lives but in one way—the way the Gods will" the sage replies.

"Ha, Ha," Arjuna laughs. "It is the will of the gods that you should live as I will. I have come to reduce Aryavarta to ashes."

"Son of Kritavirya", the sage says, "You were always shallow. Any one can rob, destroy or turn things to ashes."

"You will know it when all you possess shall be reduced to ashes," Arjuna retorts.

"What we have planted with the grace of the Gods, you cannot destroy. The more you burn it, the more it will sprout." Vasishtha answers angrily.

"Don't boast, Vasishtha, get up and ask your disciples to give us food" orders Arjuna.

"No wicked destroyer is offered hospitality in Vasishtha's ashrama, replies the sage curtly.

Arjuna rushes towards Vasishtha to pull him by the beard. Vasishtha, serene and calm, closed his eyes, and before Arjuna can touch him, falls down dead. Arjuna is taken aback and orders the ashrama to be burnt.

Thence he proceeds to the Ashrama of Bhrugu. There also Jamadagni and Renuka have declined to leave it. The laws of Aryans enjoin that an ashrama is sacred.

Arjuna has more than one grievance against the saintly Jamadagni. His father had cursed his tribe, and now he wants the son to lift the curse under threats, and become his high priest.

Then, Arjuna takes possession of the Ashrama and makes it his headquarters. He ties Jamadagni to a tree and every day he comes to him, calls upon him to lift the curse, and when Jamadagni declines shoots an arrow at him. Jamadagni declines to bless Arjuna either under threats or by temptations. He will not remove the curse. So, the sage remains tied to the tree. Everyday he comes to him, asks him whether he will remove the curse, and when the sage declines wounds him by throwing an arrow at him.

It is death by slow torture. Renuka, in tears stands day and night by her husband, giving him water and nursing his wounds. Every day she prays to the gods to send Rama. Once she asks Jamadagni:

"How long will you suffer this torture?"

"This is not torture. This is a struggle between a brute and an Arya and Arya strength will conquer."

"What will happen to you?"

"Arjuna will never get me to do what he wants. He will die, his wish unfulfilled."

Arjuna, whenever he can, demands a blessing from the sage, and is invariably denied the privilege.

Then news comes that Rama is arriving. From three directions rush the resisting armies. The centre is formed by trained horsemen with battle-axe led by Rama, on a black horse, his towering battle-axe in hand. A hallow of mysterious invincibility has already surrounded Rama, and the armies of Arjuna lose their nerve.

A battle ensues in which the Haihayas are beaten. And, finally, the two mortal enemies join in single combat.

Rama vanquishes Arjuna and Arjuna is captured. But even in defeat he is wily. He slips from his capture, catches hold of two arrows and flings one at the dying Jamadagni tied to the tree and one at Rama.

Rama sees the arrow speed. With a growl which none has heard issuing from him, he flies into air, and comes down upon Arjuna. Arjuna's head is severed from his body and rolls on the ground.

And thus ends the story of the youth of Parashurama, Rama of the Battle-Axe, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. As Rama, the son of Dasharatha, was the seventh, and Shri Krishna was the eighth. His mythic figure dominates the background in the *Mahabharata*.

This portrait of a mighty man, sometimes sinister, sometimes ruthless, shows this mythic figure as a godlike man, above the weakness of the flesh, moving throughout the work as the presiding deity of the inexorable law of organisation based on justice.

EPILOGUE

There is one play *Tarpana* (The Obesequial Offering) which, though written very early, serves as a fitting epilogue to this epic story which occupied Munshiji's attention, with intervals, well-nigh twenty-five years. The first in the series, *The Conquest of India* (*Purandara Parajaya*) was written in 1923. The last one, *Bhagvan Parashurama,* was published in 1946.

Aged Rama, still worshipped as "Divinity", has settled down in *Shurparaka.* The Haihayas, under the sons and grandsons of Arjun had again invaded Aryavarta, destroyed the hermitages and all but exterminated the Bhrugus.

One Bhrugu woman has, however, saved only one son by concealing him in her thigh (*uru*) and so he comes to be called Aurva. He dedicates his life to resurrecting Aryavarta, studies the learning of the Aryas and collects a band of devoted disciples. He then retreats into the mountains and raises an army of disciples pledged to rescue Aryavarta from the Haihayas. He also rescued the last vestige of Aryan Royalty, the infant scion of the royal line, Sagara by name. The sage then brings him up.

But fates are weaving destinies differently. Aurva has decided that the boat which carries the Haihaya king's only daughter, Suvarna, on a pleasure trip, is to be sunk. When the boat is sunk, Sagar rescues her, not knowing that Aurva has willed otherwise. And then he falls in love with her.

The Haihaya king prosecutes the followers of Aurva.

Sagara knows not the plans of his master and meet Suvarna in the palace every night, by swimming the river. And thus they meet often.

At last the great day came. In his mountain fortress Aurva crowns Sagara as the king of Aryavarta at a great festival. And, to complete his prowess, prays to Lord Rama of the Battle-Axe to send him his mighty weapon. The prayer is granted; the weapon comes through the air. After installing Sagara, Aurva tells him the story of the mission of his life and also unfolds the purpose for which Sagara is dedicated.

After an hour, Sagara is seen walking along outside the natural fortress of crags. His eyes are listless. His lips are pressed in hopelessness. His forehead is creased. He looks at the hole in the crags. And he says to himself:

"Why did grandfather ask me to see him here? (Looking at the hole) No. He is not come. God, give me strength, give me vision. What shall I do? Whom shall I ask? Where shall I go? How dare I disobey grandfather? And if I do not disobey him, what shall I do? (Looks down).

"For months I and Suvarna nursed hopes of seeing peace between grandfather and Vitahavya, but they are all lost. How will grandfather, planning terrible destruction, make peace? How will the king of Haihayas, accept the mandate of Aurva and give me his daughter?

"Shall I disobey grandfather's mandate? But then, then, his life's mission will be frustrated and the Aryavarta of my dreams will never be seen.

"And Suvarna, she spends every moment in thinking of me! What will happen to her? If I kill her father, Vitahavya, what will happen to her? Her heart, tender as a blossom will be burnt to ashes. Suvarna, so fond of her father, how will she look at his murderer?

"And how shall I live without Suvarna?

"What shall I do with a throne without her? What if Aryavarta comes into existence and she is not there! Oh, God of death, come and save me from this difficulty!"

Then Aurva comes and asks for the Guru's fee. With a trembling heart Sagara folds his hands in humility and says,

"Grandfather, what can I give you? Whatever is mine, is yours.

Aurva (seriously): Get me what is not yours.

Sagara: Command me: I shall obey.

Aurva: Is it a promise?

Sagara (almost in a fainting fit): Yes.

Aurva: Then, bring me tomorrow at sunrise—

Sagara (frightened): What?

Aurva: Two heads, one of Vitahavya—and—

Aurva: —of Suvarna, Vitahavya's daughter.

Sagara (with folded hands): Forgive, grandfather, Have mercy, you are frightening. Your mission is des-

truction. Cruelty is easy for you. But the Aryavarta of your dreams—the holy land of the Aryas, peaceful and happy,—sanctified by sacrifice and mantras—will it ever arise from such destruction?

Aurva: Has anything remained pure after the touch of the Haihayas? At their touch, the vows have been fetid beef. Brahmans but beats. The peace of Aryavarta will only spring from the manure of Haihaya's blood?

Sagara begs for Suvarna's life.

Aurva: Shall the son of that woman be the Emperor of Aryavarta?

Then Aurva tells Sagara of what the Haihayas have done to Aryavarta.

"The Ashrams were flying dust. Vultures flew over the skeletons of sacred cows. Saraswati and Drishadvati —the streams of purity—emitted the stench of rotting corpses. My father and other Bhrugus fought till they died. And then the grandfather of your Suvarna pursued women . . . Those who climbed trees were hunted with arrows; those who fell in the rivers were pursued and dishonoured, those who escaped into the mountains were caught, raped; their wombs were nipped open, and then they were left to die.

"My mother concealed me in her thigh—for ten years. Then she concealed herself in Gautam's house and brought me up.

"The Haihayas built their empire on the dust of Aryavarta. I vowed to resurrect it, single-handed. I slowly rescued the looted wealth of Aryas. I wandered over the land for years. For years, I sat at the feet of Parashurama, the mighty son of Jamadagni, venerable in ancient dignity. At last, I came to this mountain fortress. I made all of you my disciples; in your hearts I laid the foundations of Aryavarta. I gave in your hands the instruments of Haihaya destruction. And, for years now, the might of Haihayas which overspread the land from sea to sea, has trembled at my name. . . And, tomorrow at sunrise I shall see my resolve fulfilled—I shall make obsequial offerings to my ancestors, doomed to premature death, with the blood of the last Haihaya."

Sagara hesitates and breaks down. But the inexorable Aurva insists on his pupil carrying out his mandate. Aurva

demands of Sagara that the pupil must repay the debt to the master by killing the last Haihaya thus enabling Aurva to offer the obsequial offerings to his dead ancestors with his blood.

Vitahavya, the Haihaya king, invites the king of Saurashtra of the Haihaya branch to marry Suvarna to him. While the festivities are going on, the distant mountain top rumbles and blood red flames issue from it—sure signs that Aurva is angry. The thoughtless king of Saurashtra rushes into the forest boasting that he would kill Aurva. He is engulfed in darkness and is destroyed by Aurva's might.

Suvarna, however, is very happy and hopes that Sagara would bring about peace between Aurva and her father and then she would marry him. She goes to the terrace of the palace and waits for Sagara who is expected to come there.

The last scene of the drama may, with certain omissions, be reproduced.

The lovers meet. Suvarna finds Sagara highly nervous.

Suvarna (smiling): Now you have melted. Have you done something? Have you had a talk with the grandfather?

Sagara (startled): Grandfather?

Suvarna (angry in jest): Have you forgotten? What about peace?

Sagara (inattentive): Yes. Peace!

Suvarna: Did you talk to him about it?

Sagara (looking to all sides with fright): Yes.

Suvarna: What did the grandfather say?

(Impatiently)

Speak—

Sagara (in a harsh tone): Grandfather is coming here tomorrow morning.

Suvarna (startled): Grandfather! Here! (with laughter) Yes, Yes, I see—to make peace. Well done. Sagara (she embraces Sagara). You have worked wonders even with grandfather.

Sagara (bitterly): Yes, yes, I have worked wonders.

Suvarna: As you have worked wonders with me.

Sagara (smiling bitterly again): Yes, yes. In the same way.

Suvarna: Then there would be peace tomorrow.

Sagara: Tomorrow when the sun rises, (with frightened eyes looks into the darkness).

Then they cling to each other and try to sleep.

Sagara: When will it be? When will the dawn come? I feel as if someone is coming.

Suvarna: No, no. It is only midnight.

Sagara (speaking in a piteous voice): Then come to me, my love. Time once gone never returns (draws her to him) Come nearer. This night is perfectly beautiful. How do we know what the dawn will bring?

Suvarna (coming nearer): Yes, yes. Sagara.

Sagara (kissing her): Love! Today let us both be one.

Suvarna (clinging to him): Yes, Lord.

Sagara: This moment once gone, will never come. What do we care for the coming moments? (kissing her) This moment only, my love.

The scene darkens after some hours, Suvarna is seen sleeping with her head on the lap of Sagara.

Sagara (to himself): Suvarna, your night of perfect beauty is fast disappearing. In the very moment you are glimpsing the life of heavenly delight. You will have it. A few hours; a few moments and the portals of your heaven—yours and mine—will be closed for ever!"

Sagara (to himself): Shall I refuse the commandments? What about the prayers of this beloved? Revenge for my father's death? Then, do I not owe something to love? If I have to create Aryavarta, have I not to seek the companionship which alone will make life worth living? Why, Oh! Why? If Guru, and father, and Aryàvarta all have a claim on me why is it Suvarna and I alone do not matter, Oh! God! (weeps).

Suvarna suddenly wakes up and tells Sagara that she had a dream, that both of them would go away in a boat, far far away, and then goes to sleep gain.

Sagara: She wants to go away, far, far away but with me. Is there no place on the earth, unblighted by revenge which actuates Vitahavya and Aurva? Untouched by misery and fear at the end of the world on some mountain top in some solitary spot? Suvarna and I—fearlessness and peace; the sun and the moon our only companions. Can we not find such a place? (half asleep). When no

ancestors will ever make any demand of us. The future will never frighten us. Where the commands will come only from the heart, where our anxiety will only be inspired by love; where our only ambition will be to make each other happy. I shall sow; she will reap. I will pound; she will grind. I shall bring flowers; she will make garlands. Both of us will sing in harmony with running brooks. We shall smile in sympathy with the breeze and dance to the tune of thunders. (Dozes off, but suddenly feels startled and wakes up). Did I fall asleep? Did I dream? Is sleeplessness deceiving me? Keeping me happy in the palaces of fancies (laughing cruelly). Can there be a place untouched by the conflict of Aurva and Haihaya? There must be. Why not? Mother Yamuna, will take us there. Mother, won't you save your children? (sits quietly).

Suddenly Suvarna wakes up trembling and looks with frightened eyes and asks:

"Oh Sagara, who is he? I am afraid."

Sagara: Suvarna, there is no one else, only I.

Suvarna (looks in all directions and trembles): Oh! I saw a fearful man in my dream. He was so tall.

Sagara (smiling): And?

Suvarna (frightened): With a big pile of white hair on his head, and a white long beard reaching to the waist.

Sagara (trembling): Yes.

Suvarna (in a trembling voice): Two flashing eyes like living coal. I feel as if every limb of mine is on flames..

Sâgara (unable to speak): Oh!

Suvarna (frightened): What is it?

Sagara (looking uncomfortably on all sides): Nothing; How far is the sunrise?

Suvarna: Oh long time yet. (clinging to him) Let us go to sleep again.

Sagara: No, we can't sleep?

Suvarna (sleepily): Why?

Sagara: Suppose there is no peace between your father and the grandfather?

Suvarna: Then things will be difficult.

Sagara (timidly): Suppose we run away from here. Then there will be no fear.

Suvarna: How can I? If I leave my father, he will go mad. But why do you talk like this?

Sagara (smiling in a melancholy way): No, it was a passing thought. How can I separate you from your father? (coming to a decision) I am going away. Suvarna; It will be morning; am I going.

Suvarna: Wait, the dawn has not broken yet.

Sagara (firmly putting Suvarna aside): Love, it is very late.

Suvarna (with frightened eyes looks at the mountain from where bloody smoke issues): What is this?

Sagara (frightened): What is this?

Suvarna (trembling): Your grandfather is angry.

(In a slowly whitening dawn reddish streaks of smoke rise from the mountain and thunder is heard from the mountain top).

Sagara (trembling): Oh! Suvarna, let me go, my love. Remember me some time.

Suvarna (gets up): What is it?

Sagara (covers his eyes with his hands and says in a pitiful voice): Suvarna, my love, it is useless to deceive you any further. Your night of perfect beauty is gone. My happiness is extinguished. (gets up ready to go).

Suvarna (catching hold of Sagara's hands): Why?

Sagara (hastily): Suvarna, what I told you of peace was untrue. The grandfather is on the war path. Soon, flames will rise from all the quarters. Look there, that village is in flames. Every Haihaya will now die.

Suvarna (with trembling lips): Lord, what about us? You told me that the grandfather will come here.

Sagara: Yes, he will come, (he embraces Suvarna) not to make peace but to get Vitahavya killed with my hands. (he pushes Suvarna aside).

Suvarna: To kill my father! You, Oh!

Sagara: Let us go. Let me go. I shall not kill your father. Let me die myself.

Suvarna (holding his hands): You stay here. Who is going to touch you?

Sagara: Look in that direction. It is in flames.

(Suvarna looks at it. In the distance uproar is heard in the town).

Suvarna: What is this?

Sagara (teeth clenched): The massacre of the Haihayas. Let me go.

Suvarna: But why?

Sagara: To die.

Suvarna (crying): Lord, you go to die? Then wait, I will go with you. Let us run away.

Sagara (looking at her): That was what I was telling you. Are you coming?

(From beneath the terrace a terrible voice is heard)

Aurva (unseen): Sagara, I have come.

Sagara (striking his head with his hands): Oh! Gods!

Suvarna: What is it? Who spoke?

Sagara (confused and looking on all sides): Come. Let us run away. Is there another way?

Aurva (unseen): Sagara, your father—

Sagarva (trembling): Come, we will run away by the back door.

Suvarna (running after him): It is closed. But who is he?

Aurva (unseen): Your master, and your Aryavarta.

Sagara (taking hold of Suvarna's hands and whispering): Come with me. We will run away across the terrace.

Suvarna (frightened and running): Come.

Sagara: This way, Suvarna.

Suvarna (stands transfixed): Lord, there is the old man of my dream. (Sagara turns).

Aurva stands at the end of the terrace with the Battle-Axe of the son of Jamadagni in his hands. From all sides, fire appears to burst out. Clamour of voices is heard in the distance. There is a great uproar in the palace.

Aurva: I have yet to offer obsequies.

Sagara: Grandfather, Himself, O, the gods.

Suvarna: Aurva! Oh Mother mine! (Suvarna faints).

Aurva: It is the dawn. Take this weapon blessed by the divine son of Jamadagni.

Sagara (dazed): Master!

Aurva: Take this and conquer.

(He forces the Battle-Axe into Sagara's hands).

(Sagara trembles in every limb, clenches his teeth and holds the weapon firmly. He feels as if he is in flames and his eyes become bloodshot.)

Sagara (harshly): Grandfather, you want victory. You want the head of Vitahavya. Wait. I will bring it. Cruelty incarnate! May your wish be satisfied!

(He runs away like a lunatic. The palace is enveloped in smoke. Uproar comes nearer. A smile is on Aurva's lips).

Like a mad man Sagara comes back with the head of Vitahavya dripping with blood. Flames are seen on all the four sides.

Aurva: Gods, Mother, Master! My resolve is being accomplished.

Sagara (laughing like a demon): Master, here is one head you wanted. (throws the head at the feet of Aurva) I have yet to repay half the debt which you demanded as my teacher. I will give you more than you want. Wait. (He bends and holds Suvarna's head by her hair and lifts the weapon) Oh! Oh! Aurva (bending on her) Wait, she has already preceded her father.

Aurva's disciples (unseen): Victory to Emperor Sagara.

Aurva: Then Vitahavya was the last of the Haihayas.

Sagara (in a fearful voice): But I have yet to give you the master's fee. (He lifts the weapon to kill himself. Lightning flashes and thunder is heard overhead and the Battle-Axe disappears from the hand of Sagara.) Oh! Oh! (he shouts like a mad man).

Aurva (putting his hand on the shoulder of Sagara): Your Majesty! The great weapon of Jamadagni's mighty son has fulfilled its mission. The last of the Haihayas is dead. My mission is also fulfiled. Let me offer the obsequies. (chants).

Svadha (bearing nectar, ghee and milk): May you propitiate the ancestors. (He makes the obsequies offering the blood of Vitahavya) (Sagara looks on senselessly. Shankua, Ugra and other disciples arrive).

Disciples: Victory to grandfather! Victory to Emperor Sagara.

Aurva (in a triumphant voice): Your Majesty, Victory to Aryavarta!

(Sagara bends his head over his chest and says sorrowfully "Victory to Aryavarta!".)

(Aurva drags Sagara and others follow singing the chant of Victory).

7

Art and Philosophy of Life

I

An old man with so much of youth in him. This is how I would draw the bold outline of Shri K. M. Munshi's portrait. His own words still ring in my ears. "Every birthday of mine comes to make me more young in vigour," he remarked, as I sat with him in his drawing-room at Bombay.

As a writer, Munshiji's genius is almost monumental in Gujarat. His influence over the whole range of modern Gujarati literature has been observed by the first rank critics. He is a novelist and a story-writer: a playwright and an essayist: a biographer, and even interested in autobiography, *Adadhe Raste,* or Half Way, as he would call it.

One, who reads a writer in translation, can never really get in touch with the original associations of image and metaphor; or as Virginia Woolf would put it, if we have to depend on the translator, a writer would look like a man deprived by an earthquake or a railway accident not only of his clothes, but also of something subtler and more important—his manners, the idiosyncrasies of his characters. I must admit that I have not been able to read Munshiji's writing in Gujarati, though I know how this language sounds and how much importance is now attached to it on India's language map.

In 1935, when Munshiji joined hands with Prem Chand to revitalize the *Hans* Magazine under the general supervision of Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad, I had the feeling that the door has opened and a significant visitor has come in. It was a proof of the growing strength of India's *lingua franca.* Munshiji himself invited me to participate by writing on the songs of the

Indian people. This was not all. The same year I received a copy of Munshiji's book, *Gujarata and Its Literature,* originally written inside prison walls. And I was delighted to note that Mahatma Gandhi has mentioned my travels in quest of India's folk-songs in the foreword.

In 1936, we met at Faizpur Congress, and he specially invited me to stay with him at Bombay. "Have you met Gandhiji?" he enquired, reminding me of our common link. "More than once", I came out smilingly. He was glad to know that I had talks with Gandhiji on old and new songs in the light of a national awakening in village India everywhere.

"When will you go direct to the people to find out what they are thinking, and to give expression to their thoughts?" I said, referring to Gandhiji's suggestion in the foreword.

"Gandhiji has rightly marked the gulf between the middle classes and the masses in our country," he had to admit, "and he is frank enough to say that the language of the masses has yet to take definite shape. He is also right when he says: 'Gujarat like the rest of India is brooding. The language is shaping itself. There is enough work awaiting writers . . .'"

"What do you say about Gujarati culture?" I enquired.

"I have given my views in the concluding pages of *Gujarata and Its Literature.* As I have said there, Gujarat can have no existence apart from India. Obviously, a vision of new Gujarat is before us; free, strong and rich; with its people forging a new culture. The spirit of Aryan culture obliterated provincial boundaries. It struggled for unity. Aryan culture is not the apparatus of life, not the stones by which the mother of the Vedic Rishi ground corn, not the canoe by which Rama and Sita crossed the Sarayu, not the *charkha* in which many see the embodiment of its spirit. Civilisation has varied: it has been borrowed from others from age to age. Our social and religious beliefs have always changed with time, with the civilisation of each age. Culture has to be found in the sense of continuity, or in the consciousness of unity. Every generation of Gujaratis has won its own variety of culture afresh."

In early 1937, I lived with Munshiji at Bombay for three months. He was busy in the elections, yet he found time to

discuss matters of art and culture. His wife, Lilavati, well-known for her short stories, one-act plays and sketches of contemporary and historical personalities, referring to one of her essays told me one day that the modern world began when man recognized the independent personality of woman; she agreed with me that even in folklore we can trace the revolt of woman. His daughters sang Gujarati folk-songs, when even some friends were invited. His sons became my friends. I was treated like a member of the family. One evening, as we talked about the Garba Dance of Gujarat, we all got up to dance to the rhythm of the Garba, when even Munshiji came forward to give lead. This was the triumph of Gujarati culture. The whole family shared the festive joy, as even the colours matched on a *sari* or a bodice.

As I returned from the library one evening, Munshiji told me that it would be wrong to say that the Garba is confined to Gujarat. On an earlier occasion he had quoted from Sharangdhar to assert that Parvati, the spouse of Shiva, trained Bana's daughter, Usha, in the *lasya* dance, and that Usha trained the women of Saurashtra or Gujarat in this art. Now talking of his travels in various provinces, he went on to say: I saw with my own eyes that the *Asur* girls in those days had come to live in Andhra, Tamilnad and Kerala as well, and they also trained the women of these parts in dances more or less similar to the Garba of Gujarat. Our claim was based on wrong notions. As the waves of the ocean of India's common culture reached our frontiers, we took it for our own pond."

"Poetry in the Garba songs of Gujarat is supported by the dance rhythm," I said, apparently not moved by Munshiji's view of all-embracing unity. "I am afraid we may not miss the individuality of the Garba itself. Unity of culture may be true, but who can deny the importance of diversity?"

"Our business", I emphasized, "should be to consider the maximum effect of a particular art form of a province. It must be studied in every detail, as it struggles against oblivion."

Sometimes we talked of the folk music of Bengal. He agreed with me when I said that Tagore was greatly influenced by folk tunes as in turn he himself influenced some of these

tunes. The distinguishing quality of this music, I stressed, reveals itself in the emotional image and association of the endless curves of the soil of Bengal where even horizons seem to merge into long distances. It is rather a sad music. It tells of human destiny and human longing.

He praised, however, the idea of making a comparative study of Indian folklore. "The people's history can only be written in the light of their aspirations, exploits and sufferings," I said with conviction, "we must not neglect the people's art and tradition, for they reveal even gods trembling before the sons of the soil."

I remember to have attended the annual function of Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, when Munshiji specially arranged to invite some old bards from Kathiawar. Two bards at a time would stand face to face and sing the most striking *Doha* couplets antiphonally. Furthermore, they seemed to end nowhere.

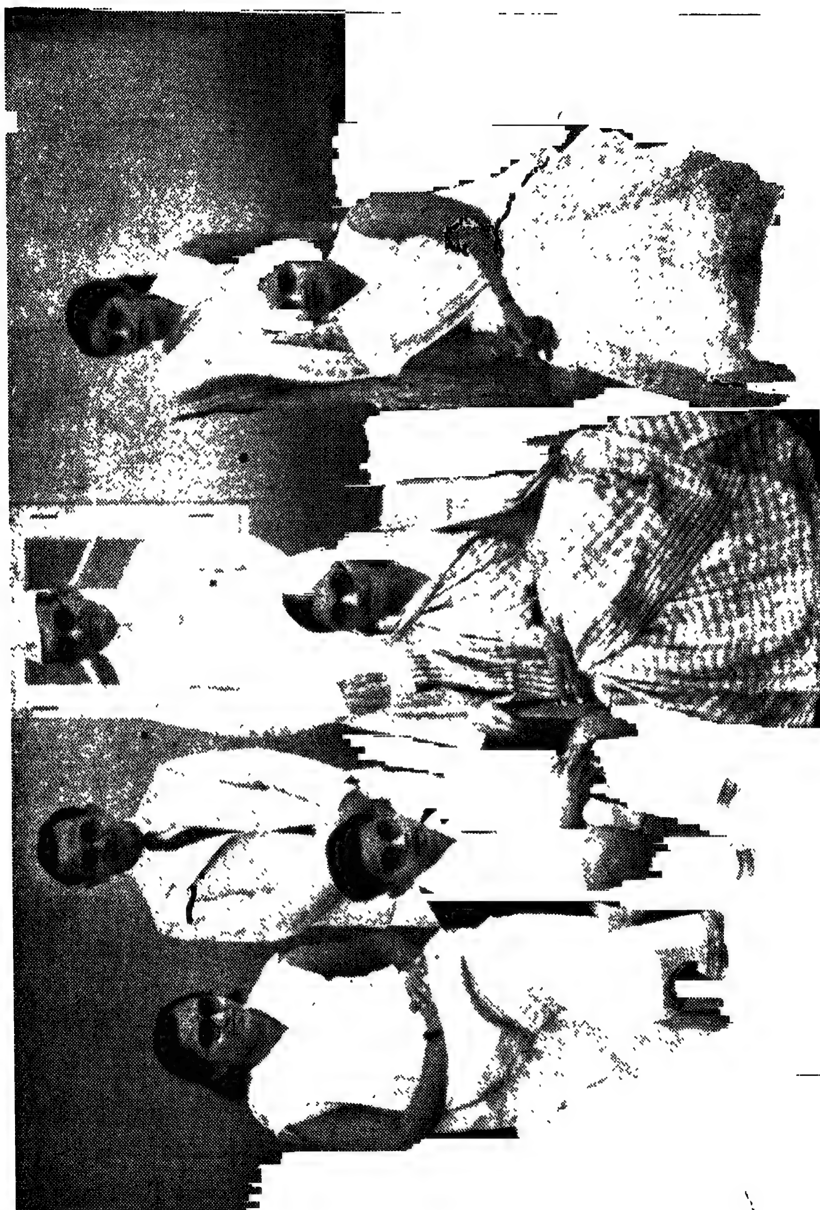
"How did you find our *Dohas?"*, Munshiji enquired, as we returned from the Parishad.

"*Dohas* are common in many provinces," I stressed, "and they are conspicuous everywhere for conciseness in thought and word."

"One of the persons who recited the *Dohas* is Gokuldas Raichura, who has recorded hundreds of these valuable pieces of Gujarati folk-poetry," Munshiji told me with national pride.

Soon I met Raichura, who gave me an anthology of *Dohas* of Kathiawar. It moved from hand to hand, as we sat in the drawing-room. Some of these *Dohas,* as the elder daughter of Munshiji explained the text, showed gradations of colour and treatment. "Indisputably, the *Dohas* maintain freedom of spirit," I emphasized, and even Munshiji agreed with me.

I had a room to myself. But in the drawing-room I met new visitors every day. Munshiji was a busy man, yet he did not easily refuse any visitor. Everything seemed superior. At lunch time, as also at dinner, I always found new faces. Everyday new guests joined. It was again the triumph of Gujarati culture. As if it was impossible for Munshiji to do without guests.



Life at Munshiji's residence on the Malabar Hill seemed to follow an essential rhythm. More than anything else, it had the stamp of art. Attuned in every string everybody's soul vibrated with a fresh melody. Even servants enjoyed freedom.

For over five years I was cut off from Bombay, and it was in 1943, after I came back from my visit to Mohenjo-Daro in Sind, that I once again met Munshiji at his residence on the Malabar Hill. We dined together. His wife, Lilavati, looked young in spirit with her husband, though the whole family seemed to have changed much.

I was told that the older daughter was married and now lived with her husband in another house on the Malabar Hill. I went to see her there. She greeted me in her typical style. She had every reason to be proud of herself—daughter of a great writer. I really wondered how a girl would grow up much quicker than others, as I happened to recognize another girl near Munshiji's residence. She was tall and naturally reminded me of the statue of the dancing girl inside the Mohenjo-Daro museum. I thought I should share this idea with Munshiji but somehow I did not like to mention it before him.

Next visit was paid to Madame Sophia Wadia, the founder of the Indian P.E.N. I clearly remembered the day when during my stay with Munshiji last time he had introduced me to Madame Wadia.

As a member of the P.E.N. I got invitation for a lecture on 'Songs of Rural India'. I readily accepted it. "Last time we had Sarojini Naidu to preside over your P.E.N. lecture," said Madame Wadia, "whom would you like to preside this time?"

"Can we get Munshiji", I at once enquired.

"Why not?" she said smilingly, "I shall myself ask him."

The idea worked. The 19th April was fixed for the lecture at the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

> "The ordinary histories of India," I went on to say, "tell us of kings and conquests, of battles and bloodshed. But the real history of India, the way the people had lived all these centuries was embedded in the songs of Rural India. The heart of Mother India beats to their rhythm.

In them she opens her heart to us. Eternal verities like God, the clouds, the good earth, the cycle of birth, life and death, love, longing and sorrow, human relationships, in fact all that constitutes a simple appeal to the permanent elements of human nature, are the recurring *motifs*, whether the song comes from Kashmir or from Kerala. The relations between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, the longing of the lonely wife for her absent husband, finds expression in a variety of ways."

As I recited a song from Gujarat, I marked a typical smile on Munshiji's face. It was not ironical, for I was sure about the accuracy of the original tune. It followed a song from Rajputana. It was easy for me to show that but for minor differences of detail, they were almost identical in theme and detail. Furthermore, I maintained that the same could be said of most songs from different parts of India. Though often the local colouring changed, the essential unity of theme and sentiment persisted through all their varied expressions and proved irrefutably the basic unity of Indian life and culture.

"If poetry is the expression of a full heart", I emphasized, "in folk-songs we see poetry at its very source. I would cite a peasant's answer to my question why he composed a song, that when the song came to him he had to sing it as a rain-cloud must pour down its contents. But music is the real life of folk-poetry. On a printed page the songs are dull and lifeless, like dry leaves on a botanist's table. Music and rhythm are essential. The collectors of folk-songs have therefore to catch the original melody of the pieces and not the words. The folk-dances go hand-in-hand with the songs. I know in the eyes of some of our people, folk-songs are like untouchables: they would not allow them to come nearer. The collection and preservation of these receptacles of much that is beautiful, vital and ancient in Indian culture, however, is no unimportant task."

Munshiji got up amidst cheers. In his concluding remarks he maintained that the folk-mind is the same everywhere, and that languages may differ folk-poetry is the same all the world over.

"I disagree with the speaker's view that folk-songs are treated as untouchables," Munshiji stressed. "On the contrary they have been an inspiration to much of modern renascent poetry, as even the Garba has attained the real national colour in Gujarat. I would add, however, that under the strain of continued economic distress the beauty and the simplicity of the countryside are fast yielding place to an unfortunate tragic outlook. I hope for better time when the villages will be themselves again."

Again, three years have passed, and we have not met. Yet I remember my friend, and hope to see him soon on the Malabar Hill at Bombay. He is going to be sixty. May be, I can see him on his 60th birthday, when many of his friends will gather round him with birthday greetings. I am afraid, however, that he may not introduce me to his friends, saying: "Here is a wonderful friend, who has not yet read me in my own language."

But why should I be so self-conscious? Whenever I look within, friends rise in memory like stars. But it is not easy to show the portrait of each of them to the outside world. Someone may be remembered for memorable appearance, another for perfect manners and accent; someone seems to command us for being on almost equal terms; still another person may be such that we raise our eyes when he speaks, clearly realizing as though he was going to reveal himself for the first time. Individuals, like tribes and nations, never reveal their mystery so easily. Essentially, we look like strangers for long periods.

Munshiji's portrait, however, cannot be mixed up in hundreds of other portraits. Obviously, I know him partly, yet I am all the more convinced of what I really discovered in him. I have seen him in moments of vision. Above all, he can illumine the unity of culture. Culture, like life itself, is one, he would say. Colours must help each other to complete the picture, he would wish you to maintain. Even words must unite to make a sentence, you say in response, and he spreads his arms to embrace you.

I leave it for Dr. Taraporevala to discuss, if Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi was really 'afraid of his reception' when he came before the people of Gujarat in 1913 with his first novel, *Verni Vasulata*, under the pen-name Ghanshyama. But this

gives me a significant image of my friend with rich associations, for though Krishna is freely termed as Ghanshyam, it also means the dark rain cloud, and Munshiji has been responsible for making the literary fields of Gujarat all the more fertile. The same year he came out as a novelist and a lawyer. I know he has won hundreds of cases in law courts, but I am more concerned with his life as a writer. In 1930 he became a Congressman and experienced jail life for over two years. The year 1937 saw him as the Minister of Law and Order in Bombay. On another occasion he gave the slogan of 'Akhand Hindustan' that more or less centred round his favourite theme of cultural unity. Hindi Sahitya Sammelan will always remember him as one of its ex-Presidents. But Munshiji's real triumph is the triumph of Gujarati Literature.

How I wish that my greetings reach my friend on his birthday, when ladies and gentlemen would discuss his personality. Distance is quite long, yet my voice, I am sure, can reach him. Hope mingles with joy, as I look within, and the artist within the four walls of my mind gives bold touches to make the portrait. I am not afraid, if this portrait remains unfinished, or surprisingly different from what others have to show looking at the same person from a different perspective.

II

A man like Munshiji who has been able to compress so much into so brief a span as thirty-seven years—for we must discount the first twenty-five years as a period of training or probation—must be having certain springs of action, certain reserves of the spirit, to sustain and replenish him during his arduous journey, to give him a steady sense of direction, to help him to preserve his equanimity in the face of the storms, quicksands and earthquakes that are strewn across life. Actions do not simply happen, books are not mechanically written, speeches are not automatically deliverd; it is not always desire for power or craving for money that makes the successful politician or the successful lawyer; the educationist, the journalist, the social reformer, the political agitator, they act in one way or

another because they cannot help acting otherwise, because the complex of heritage, heredity, tradition, environment and acquired accomplishments determines the pull of the action. In the final analysis, one is yoked to this pull—although one might have oneself partly determined the nature and strength of the pull. To this pull—the invisbile engine of purposive action—might be given the name 'philosophy' which, as understood here, is nothing else than the index of one's innate spiritual impulse and crystallized intellectual convictions.

The term 'philosophy', however, is liable to much promiscuous use. This is the reason why we should be clear in our minds as to the sense in which it is used in a particular context. 'Philosophy' is defined by the Oxford lexicographers, H. F. and F. G. Fowler, as "love of wisdom or knowledge"; it is equated with intellectual proficiency or perfection by Cardinal Newman; and it is also used with reference to any generalised view of a subject. More especially, the word 'philosophy' is applied to total world views concerning the origin of the universe and the relation between soul and God, matter and Spirit, death and Immortality.

Indeed, we are all philosophers, sometime or other, to a greater or lesser extent, for we are all—even the obscurest or least intellectually equipped amongst us—occasionally overwhelmed by the weary weight of this unintelligible world, a sudden tremor passes over us, our hairs stand on end, our *Gandivas* slip unaccountably from our hands, and our minds are all a maddening whirl. And we must peremptorily ask the first of all—last of all—questions: To what end? What am I? —Hither coming, not knowing whence, what is my duty here? What may I expect in this world?

Introspection born of anguish and philosophy born of introspection are common phenomena. The unlettered peasant suffering under the blow of an utter seasonal failure or a domestic calamity is potentially as fruitful a soil for philosophy as is a super-subtle specimen of sophistication who is crushed by a conspiracy of adverse circumstances. Nor need one suffer in one's own person for such introspection to plume its feathers and let grow its wings till, the long journey over, the sanctuary

is reached and the perplexities are no more. The tender for another's pain, the unfeeling for his own!

And, by and by, through study and contemplation, through the graduate course of experience and the post-graduate course of Yoga, even average man builds, brick by brick, the edifice of his personal philosophy, to serve both as a theatre for preparation and as a refuge of safety. Without such a personal philosophy, however vague in its outline or uncertain in its practical applications, man would be less than human and no better than the beast. It is his 'philosophy' that emboldens average man to stand the shocks of circumstance, nay, to overcome them and even to turn them to creative use. The materials for one's personal philosophy may be gathered from divers sources—the edifice itself may be a long time a building or, like Aladdin's magic structures, may be reared in a moment by transcendent illumination—but the result is substantially the same.

Munshiji is no daring philosophical thinker like a Kant or a Hegel or a Professor Alexander; he neither claims nor aspires to be a deep student of philosophy like a Ranade or a Radhakrishnan; still less does he resemble a metaphysical thinker doubled with a yogi like Shri Aurobindo. But Munshiji has eagerly and consciously sought all his life long a philosophical basis for his action—he has, even like Gandhiji, though in a more restricted sphere and with less sensitized instruments, wrestled and experimented with Truth—he has turned from thought to action, and back again from action to remorseless self-analysis—he has alternately tempered his philosophy on the anvil of action or sought from his philosophy the strength for fresh spurts of action. The see-saw of Munshiji's life-career can thus be represented as action issuing from philosophy, followed by philosophy issuing from action, but these two recurrent phases of his career are really the reverse and obverse of the same medal, the tell-tale indices of his outward and inner lives.

In his impressionable early years, Munshiji seems to have been drawn to various books, personalities and ideologies. The bud of human personality has to bloom, with petal after petal

achieving its full amplitude and beauty, under the warmth of association with great books, great ideas and great men. Munshiji was born in a cultured Brahmin family of Gujarat, and he therefore grew up in an atmosphere of undefiled Aryan Hindu culture. And what, at the very bottom, was Aryan culture? As Munshiji himself writes:

> "Behind the words and achievements of a man we can always trace the personality; behind the personality, the grace, strength and harmony of outlook; behind them, the dominant motive, and still further the Idea which impels the motive, harmonizes the personality and gives to the words and deeds a living influence. Similarly, behind the social, literary and aesthetic achievements of the Aryan Culture stands the influence of two immortal works: the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. And behind their influence the inspiration, which through a hundred varying channels, has been given by the undying message of life vouchsafed by Shri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita.*"

Of books, then the supreme place goes to the *Gita*—it is, in Shri Aurobindo's words, "the world's greatest scripture, a powerful shaping factor in the revival of a nation and a culture." And Munshiji too has found in the *Gita*, through all the vicissitudes of his career, the ground-plan of his life-philosophy and the hidden springs of both the urge to action and the power to make action effective.

It is, however, but natural that during his boyhood, youth and early manhood, Munshiji should have attached more importance to persons than to ideas—or rather, should have first felt attracted to sundry individuals and then only to the ideas for which they stood. Youth's spring-time is endowed with tumult more than serenity, with abundance of the unripe more than of the few choice ripe fruit, with bursting energy more than chastened and sublimated power. It is through spring and summer that the way lies to autumn and its quiet coves: so too it is through youth's unfolding new energies, its ever-fresh experiments and contacts, and through the sterner experiences of manhood, that the pilgrim, now a sadder and a wiser man, reaches at last the threshold Felicity.

Munshiji has at various times, right from the days of his boyhood, emotionally attached himself, in terms of love or admiration or respect or even veneration, to a whole host of persons and personalities. As he candidly tells us:

> "From my earliest days I became conscious that I could not grow in stark isolation. Growth for me was only possible under the influence of another personality. I worshipped my father, but he died when I was a boy. I loved my mother, though the attitude was not of a reverential sort at first. But I had great admiration for a friend or two .... A professor captured my imagination; then Shri Aravinda (Aurobindo), who was also my professor, for some time, did it. When I came to the Bombay Bar, I vehemently admired some eminent lawyers with whom I worked. Then I have loved my wife . . . Later Gandhiji was added to my pantheon."

It appears too that, during the Partition of Bengal, Shri Aurobindo "constantly dwelt in my imagination and for some years his inspiration never failed me". Still another of Munshiji's heroes was Napoleon, as portrayed by Abbot, and he was to the youthful admirer "what Shri Krishna was to Arjun, 'the home, the Asylum, the friend'."

Impressionable in the extreme, Munshiji has, like Tennyson's Ulysses, been a part of all that he has met. From the outset there was the desire to put forth his utmost powers--to bring out the best in himself—in a word, to make good. But how was Munshiji to translate nebulous desire into hard reality? The education that he had received in college had only imposed "fetters of cast-iron, alien thoughts, on him", turned him into a "walking fraud" and equipped him with "intellect divorced from will, belief in ideals which are belied in life". On the other hand, as it were to redress the balance, there were other forces working in Munshiji's life—the living example of Shri Aurobindo's *brahmatej,* as also the powers and personalities met in books, or Titans in literature like Shakespeare, Carlyle, Shelley, and Victor Hugo. Munshiji was not accordingly long haunted by the nightmare Unbelief, and he was able to march ahead with the staff of Faith.

Many books have doubtless influenced Munshiji, but the *Gita* is the key-book among them all. The *Gita,* however, is not a simple Rule of Three. It is a manual of practical philosophy and a code of creative action. Its meaning is apparently simple, for the *Gita* was originally spoken to a man like Arjuna, who was a great soldier but a poor thinker, at the commencement of a sanguinary war with the opposing armies actually watching, with increasing suspense and fascination, the progress of the 'Song Celestial'. But much exegesis and speculation have gathered round the *Gita* during the past two thousand years, and we are today in danger of losing sight of the clear limpid water if we fix our curious gaze on the clustering leaves and branches. Munshiji seems to have wisely sought the source itself without allowing himself to be much distracted by the exegetic overgrowth of the centuries now left behind. He has, however, profited by a study of Shri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita,* Lokamanya Tilak's *Gita Rahasya* and Gandhiji's writings on the *Gita.*

Likewise, while no doubt Munshiji has responded to many personalities and has been influenced by them, some names stand more prominent than the others. Ramachandra, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavira, Shankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Mira Bai, Tulsi Das, Dayananda, Narayana, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo, Gandhiji—here is an imperfect enumeration of the figures in Munshiji's gallery of divine or semi-divine personalities, and he pays his homage to them all; but two of them, both happily with us still, have exercised a particularly potent and personal spell on Munshiji's life and thought. These are Shri Aurobindo and Gandhiji, the "seer of Aryan Culture" and "its modern architect" respectively. Poised between these two effulgent Suns, Munshiji like a self-conscious planet has lurched, now this way, now that, but has generally managed to steer an individual middle course.

To Munshiji the questions—What ought I to do? What can I hope for?—are tried old friends, they come to him at unpredictable moments demanding an answer in terms of action, they return again and again with every new crisis in his personal or public life. At one time, rather in his nonage,

Munshiji hoped through *vairagya* to temper, discipline and perfect himself as an instrument of action:

> "I then decided to control the lure of form, taste, smell touch and sound. I enforced upon myself a rigid code of turning away from their enjoyment. But soon I realized the potency of my individual nature. Beautiful forms danced before me and I created them in literature. I slept on the floor but my mind yearned to touch the soft down and the delicate flower tip. The murmuring rustle of leaves the distant lilting tunes of a flute, sent thrills through my being. My nature declined to accept a negative discipline of self-suppression. After years of fruitless effort, I realized that I cannot climb out of my nature."

Degradation comes, not from possession, but from slavery to one's possessions, not from the reasonable enjoyment of the good things in the world, but from an insane hankering after money or pleasure or power, a hankering whose ravenous appetite knows no end.

In the next major phase of his career, Munshiji surrendered himself to the lure of the world and the emotions, and for a few audaciously triumphant years he scaled the Himalayas of success—in literature, in law, in politics, in society, and even so, when the first excitement was over, when life's seamy sidelights increasingly forced themselves upon him, he seemed to sense satiety and disillusion. Let me quote another piece of candid self-revelation from his writings:

> "Day after day life for me took the shape of reckoning up the total of gold mohurs earned . . . Most of the lawyers who led our Bar, Indian and British, were conscientious, upright men; but the world was too much with them. To pile up guineas, to bully or laugh at an opponent in Court, to sneer at idealism of every sort or kind, to tell smutty stories or talk scandal, and to while away the evening over a glass of whisky or a game of bridge was with many the *summum bonum* of life. No wonder that a civilisation which had as its basis the acquisition, possession and enjoyment of money could not produce better specimens of its high priests.
>
> 'I lacked the courage to break away from this routine. I simply drifted. Again and again my mind vaguely and

weakly went back to Manu, Yajnavalkya and Mitakshara who dispensed justice irrespective of the capacity of either side to mark a fee. And often in a dreamy sort of way I yearned for some purpose higher than making money and spending it.

I relied on the West for my dress and, on many occasions, for my food. But to me, the most repellent feature of my activities was the social life which my position compelled me to live.

I met insipid millionaires and denationalised apes of Western manners, and conversed with them about the weather. I sat at teas with ladies with powdered faces and no brains, and trained myself to tell them stupid stories. I herded with men to whom life was a boredom and who measured life's value by the membership of a fashionable club or the range of a golf handicap. I attended parties where Indians ate European courses of tinned food, consumed costly wine and talked of young ladies in spicy terms.

On rare occasions, I had extracted the true ring of literary beauty out of the memory of some personal struggle. But now there was not even a difficulty to hang a stray piece of heroism on. And I found the secret of true literary art slipping out of my hands. I felt like the cat which ran round its tail, but never succeeded in catching it."

Success, in short, tasted bitter like dead sea fruit, and satiety sent through the pores of his being a spasm of sickness. And he felt all the more unhappy when the protracted agony of Bardoli was enacted before his eyes.

Bardoli brought Munshiji into close contact with Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and also with peasants who all unarmed yet defied the proud might of the British bureaucracy. A little hesitantly and unwillingly, nevertheless slowly and surely and as it were inevitably, Munshiji yielded to the fascination of Gandhiji's strange unique weapon of satyagraha. There was a stir in the air, the atmosphere was uncertain and oppressive, and clouds gathered in the sky. The Lahore Congress declared for *Purna Swaraj*—the Independence Pledge was administered to seething multitudes—and a thrilling expectancy reigned everywhere. And, on March 13, 1929, Gandhiji started on his march to Dandi to break the salt law!

Munshiji found at long last that he could be no longer a mere passive spectator of the struggle in which a frail old man symbolising India's hungry masses was pitted against the unlimited resources of the British Government. After a spasm of acute heart-searching, Munshiji too surrendered:

> "Chenghis Khan and Napoleon enforced conscription at the point of the dagger and the bayonet. But this man's (Gandhiji's) method of conscription was worse; it tortured not the body but the soul. Every day of his march brought me tense excitement and insufferable agony. I felt like a thrice-cursed slave tied to a millstone of luxurious living, destined to grind and to grind for ever. Why was I not in my country's service? Why was I not ready to stand for the ideals which I always cherished? Why had I not the courage even of an ordinary Gujarati villager? When Gujarat was rising like one man, why was I, who always talked of its greatness, staying away from the fight? When the nation had declared a war, why was I thinking of sneaking away to Kashmir?
>
> I could not resist this any longer, and surrendered".
>
> The same Munshi who a decade back left the Congress fold because Gandhiji had changed its creed, now rejoined it because he felt that "outside that creed there is no honest political life".

And Munshiji promptly received his pension and peerage in the shape of six months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200.

Munshiji was jailed again in January 1932, and yet once more, for the third time, in December 1940. In between, Munshiji acted for a period of a little over two years as the Home Member of the Bombay Government under the leadership of Mr. B. G. Kher, the Congress Prime Minister. His tenure of this high office was marked by conspicuous ability, but this is not the place to assess his political achievements or his administrative efficiency. Here we are rather concerned with Munshiji's ends and means when he resorted to satyagraha. According to him, satyagraha is creative resistance, and Gandhiji's technique, although it has acquired in his hands a new splendour, is really as old as the Veda. On the eve of his third incarceration, Munshiji wrote:

> "The sands of my freedom are fast running out . . . I feel no regret, I bear no malice. But I must analyse the springs of my action.
>
> "Is my act a purely mechanical one?
>
> "It is not. I am doing it of my own free will, for I am convinced that duty points to no other way. The basis of my conviction is not political. Its roots are deep down in the eternal laws of our being."

The satyagrahi tells his opponent, simply and firmly: "Here I am. This is my Truth. I will not hurt you; I will hold fast to it; you may do what you will; I will face death cheerfully rather than forsake my truth." Such action is called by Munshiji "creative resistance", resistance directed to the realization of a noble ideal, even more than the elimination of a particular cruelty or a falsehood. And "creative resistance" has a potency and a universality which offer, according to Gandhiji, the only hope for humanity; and Munshiji agreed with Gandhiji, since he found his views in essential conformity with sanctified Hindu disciplines. As he explained in the statement from which I have quoted already, such non-violent creative resistance is indeed akin to *Tapas*:

> "*Tapas*, creative resistance through suffering is as old as the human spirit. The Rig Veda sage sang a beautiful hymn which described how the *Purusha* was sacrificed so that the universe may blossom forth. The early Christian martyrs faced the lion and suffered the cross to make the Christianity a perpetual fountain-spring of human inspiration . . . Creative resistance is the secret of perpetual youth, everlasting creator of life . . . Like unto Shiva, the god of gods, it destroys what exists; but from whatever it touches, new life begins to flow."

And, as Munshiji believed that, "Gandhism is the only hope of the future", he was content to follow the Mahatma—going the whole hog with him in regard to the doctrine of non-violence.

When he came out of prison in 1941, Munshiji found that he could no more subscribe to unadulterated non-violence in all conceivable circumstances. He had the courage of his convictions to write to Gandhiji as follows:

"Since Pakistan has been in action at Dacca, Ahmedabad, Bombay and other places, it is clear that such riots are going to be a normal feature of our life for some years. If war comes to India's frontiers or the British machinery of maintaining order weakens, they will perhaps grow more frequent and intense if a division of India is sought to be enforced for internal or external agencies through organized violence. If life, home and shrine and honour of women are threatened by *gondaism*, organised resistance in self-defence appears to me to be a paramount inalienable duty, whatever form such resistance may take".*

But Gandhiji felt that there was no place in the Congress for people who cannot adhere to non-violence at all times, and accordingly, although it meant a wrench to him, Munshiji parted company with the Congress. More recently, with the Congress returning to the parliamentary programme and all that it implies (including the use of force to quell public disorders), Munshiji has rejoined the Congress.

As once before, when Munshiji accepted failure in trying to live a life of stern self-denial, now also, having given the doctrine of non-violence a fair trial, he accepted failure, since obviously, whatever the efficacy of non-violence, his own *svabhava* could not accept it in all eventualities. He is candidness itself when he writes in extenuation of his failure:

"I knew I was falling short of a standard imposed by an all-pervading Law which was ineluctable. But my nature thundered back that in a noble cause violence was not only not ignoble but was laudable and necessary. That was my Truth. I felt miserable. I felt myself a fraud. I appeared to shelter my cowardice under a professed loyalty to non-violence. The fault was not with the law of non-violence. My individual nature indicated a different attitude. I saw men making non-violence a cloak to hide their cowardice in the face of force. I spent unquiet days and sleepless nights. The voice came to me again and again—

Acts, born of his nature,
However imperfect,
Let no man desert.

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* **Written in 1941, not in 1946!**

I felt truthful only when I shed the disharmony between my professions and my convictions".

By parting company with Gandhiji on the issue of uncompromising non-violence, Munshiji really came closer to the message of the *Gita* and to the standpoint of thinkers like Lokamanya Tilak and Shri Aurobindo. Peace is certainly one of the constituents of the highest ideal, but it cannot come with any finality on the basis of non-violence alone. It is difficult otherwise to reconcile the *Gita's* idea of *dharma yuddha* with the Gandhian ideas of non-violence. This is not to say that non-violence is a futile weapon. There are countless occasions when, in the individual or national or international planes, non-violence becomes the only feasible instrument of action.

Munshiji, then, has returned to the *Gita*. Gandhism has given him the strength and the discipline to be true to himself, to be with the Mahatma a co-worshipper of Truth rather than a mere worshipper of him. He realizes now that, perfect as he may his instruments, he may not deny his nature. He accepts the *Gita* ideal, the *Gita's* mechanics of action, the *Gita's* mystic truths. It is the *Gita's* basic assumption that "God descended into the mortal frame as Shri Krishna and through the inspirations of the *Gita* taught Arjuna to know Him, come to Him and *be* Him". And Arjuna, as Munshiji is at pains to reiterate, is all of us.

Munshiji's "life-philosophy"—in so far as it is legitimate to discuss it apart from his life—is thus the *Gita* philosophy tested in the laboratory of one unique individual life, compact of thought, ambition, endeavour, doubt, hope, success, setback, partial fulfilment, undying faith. Munshiji now knows, after a life-time of trial and error and resounding success and seeming failure, that one cannot, dare not, and must not escape the imperative demands of one's *svabhava* or one's individual nature, one's *svakarma* or the task appointed or determined by one's nature, and one's *svadharma* or the stern unbending law of one's own being, in other words, one's paramount Duty. To *know* is not enough; to act aright is not the whole of the matter through knowledge and action, through devotion and self-surrender, through the instrumentality of all thoughts, actions,

emotions and consecrations to *be*—to be Him—is the goal of man's infinitude. We may fitly conclude this essay with the following words which sum up Munshiji's conception—a conception that he has tried conscientiously to put into practice—of the creative art of life:

> "I have fought; and fought as a yogi—may be in the crudest and the most elementary sense. In this fight 'to be' and 'to do' have been an inseverable process.
>
> "To fight, therefore, is to do—to express oneself in acts—in the very process of being oneself, as also when one has become oneself.
>
> "The acts of a great personality flow naturally, spontaneously, as its radiation. To radiate one's personality through acts is the fight to which Arjuna is called. It may take the shape of an actual battle, an act of resistance, or a piece of courtesy; of a speech or a book; or of a feat of organization. Or, it may mean an effort of conquering the desire or controlling anger in all cases. But it is a potent expression of the dynamic will. To be a yogi and to fight is therefore one and the same act."

Acceptance, not denial; comprehension, not exclusion; integration, not suppression: these are the three main strands in Munshiji's life-philosophy. As for Munshiji himself, he is still wholeheartedly engaged in the creative art of life, still engrossed in the mighty endeavour of Becoming,—for, now as ever, "Dharma is Life; the Mother is its receptacle; the word, the *Bhagavad Gita*, is the flame which makes it live".

II

WORK

1 POLITICS

2 LAW

3 CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

4 THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

I

Politics

I

THE MAN IN THE MAKING

Munshiji, even as a child, showed a pronounced sympathy for the poor. When he accompanied his father from house to house in Surat when the latter went to assess house tax, the young child Munshi instinctively reacted with tears in his eyes to the sight of poverty-stricken folk. In 1900 his father was engaged in famine relief work, and the scenes of starvation and death that Munshi saw left an indelible impression on his little mind.

Coupled with this perennial undercurrent of sympathy for the underdog, the anti-British complex so usual with young Indian minds took early root in his mind. Once, in his early teens, young Munshi's sense of self-respect received a rude shock. His father, then Deputy Collector of Surat, went along with the son, to the new Collector's bungalow. But the new Collector would not tolerate carriages being brought inside the compound. His father had to get down from the carriage and walk up on foot to the bungalow of the arrogant White Collector. Young Munshi's pride was wounded beyond cure. It was rubbed into his sensitive mind that the White people were after all the rulers and his father was but a mere servant. Why should it be that before a member of the White ruling race the greatest and noblest of men—as he considered his father—should be as a dog, useful yet contemptible. No wonder Munshiji nicknamed the Collector 'Brian De Bois Gilbert', the wicked Knight from Scott's Ivanhoe. Till today, whenever

colour prejudice or racial arrogance raises its ugly head, Munshiji's eyes glow with a fierce rage.

Partly through inherited tradition and partly by his mother's recitals of epic stories, young Munshi's cultural training was of the orthodox Hindu type. With the impact of the modern college atmosphere a transformation came over him. In 1902-03, he read much of the Bible. In 1907 he was greatly impressed by the teachings of Jesus. At the College, he also read Dean Ferar's *Jesus Christ*, Renan's *Life of Christ*, Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man*, John Mill's *Liberty*, Carlyle's *French Revolution*. His study of the French Revolution was mostly responsible for the yearning for independence and equality which was now developing in him.

These childhood influences served to nurse in him the feeling of patriotic rage against the race to which the white Collectors belonged. But the zest for independence and equality received its greatest spurt by the living experienc of the eighteenth session of the Congress. He had read and heard a lot about the Congress and its leaders like Dadabhoy Navroji and Pherozeshah Mehta. Slowly but steadily his self-respect was shaping itself through national devotion. He wanted to participate actively by enrolling himself as a Congress Volunteer —even against the wishes of the father, a straight-forward official, who was too conscious of the 'salt of the Sircar'. There at the Ahmedabad Congress, he was impressed by the eloquence of Surendra Nath Bannerjee, the President of the Congress. 'We', 'our', 'our country'—he now knew the significance of these magic words, but for the first time they were fused together to form the magic slogan 'My Country'. In Surendra Nath, young Munshi saw not merely a great leader but the embodiment of that beloved country of his. His eloquence also instilled in young and ambitious Munshi a desire to train himself to perfection in the art of speaking. He now planned a programme for mastering eloquence. He began to study chapters from Blair's Belles Letters, and the speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero, Chatham and Burke. He memorised passages from the speeches of the Indicn leaders and practised speaking after the style of Surendranath in the dark deserted college hall in

the evening or under the bridge on the banks of the Narmada at Broach. Often he would stand before a mirror to co-ordinate his gestures, voice and facial expression. Before his beloved mirror he even acted all the different characters of Shakespeare's dramas.

The Russo-Japanese war and the Partition of Bengal made of young Munshi an ardent politician. The Russo-Japanese war had begun. Asia was no longer weak or docile. That thrilled many a young Asiatic mind. So did it thrill the mind of the young student of Baroda College. "Asia for Asiatics"—this new gospel quickly took root in his heart as he eagerly awaited the day when Japan would overthrow Russia. That war brightened up his self-respect. The dark skin was no longer inferior to the white. Asia was awake at last. India, too, was born not to be a British slave. Munshiji, like the student world in general at that time, began to feel a new joy.

Then commenced the active phase of Munshiji's political life. A gigantic tidal wave of national resurgence was sweeping over the whole country and his youthful mind now started thinking of many a childish plan for setting the country free. In 1905, seventeen year old Munshi was, to quote his own diary, —"materialist, ultra-reformist, ardent Congressman."

On 19th July 1905, Partition of Bengal was announced. On the 7th of August, the whole of Bengal took a national pledge to resist it. But the partition became a reality. on the 16th October. Shri Aravinda Ghosh was then in Baroda, sometimes Professor at Baroda College, at others Secretary to H. H. the Gaekwar. He had already collected round him a group of young admirers. Through one of them, Munshi became a member of a secret society. How else could freedom be won but through a secret society like Italy's Carboneri? Deeply impressed by the personality of Aravinda Ghose young Munshi, to use his own words, became one of "those ardent 'revolutionaries' who talked of Garibaldi and the French Revolution, and hoped to win India's freedom by a few hundred drachms of picric acid." Munshiji and other Aravindians even planned to meet secretly in a Chemical Laboratory of the College to experiment on the preparation of a bomb!

Munshiji, however, had no relish for meeting in secret, opening the locks of the laboratory with duplicate keys, and mixing recipes. It was alien to him. May be, as he confesses in his autobiography, he had not the requisite courage. Somehow he did not quite respond to the 'revolutionary' urge of his friends.

All along, however, during these years, 1905-1907, he was drinking deep from the speeches and writings of Shri Aravinda Ghosh. "Believe in yourself. Work for yourself. Live for yourself. The moment we decide to rule ourselves, our object will be accomplished."

That was a 'divine message' to Munshi and the young students and it was like the first sweet fragrance of spring, refreshing and enlivening. Once he met Shri Aravinda and asked him, not without some hesitation, "How can nationalism be cultivated?" Aravinda pointed to a wall-map of India, and said:

> "Look at that map. Learn to find in it the portrait of Bharat Mata. The cities, mountians, rivers and forests are the materials which go to make up Her body. Persons inhabiting the country are the cells which go to make up Her living tissues. Our literature is Her memory and speech. The spirit of Her culture is Her soul. The happiness and freedom of Her children is Her salvation. Behold Bharat, as a living Mother and worship Her in the nine-fold way."

The young aspirant was disappointed. He had thought Shri Aravinda would recommend a list of books for the study of nationalism.

"But how could one meditate?" asked Munshi.

"Have you read the works of Vivekananda?", he replied.

"No", said Munshi.

"Read his writings on Yoga and then you will understand what is meditation or *Dhyana.*"

Munshi though dissatisfied at the reply turned to Vivekananda.

Inspired by Shri Aravinda's new outlook on Nationalism, Munshi thus described his vision of the Mother in the words of 'Sudarshana' the hero of his novel *Svapnadrashta.*

"I went home in November or December. The whole world assumed a new shape. I began to see the Mother everywhere. Men, institutions, their customs and manner all looked like her limbs. My home, my caste, my village had a new meaning. The lake, the river, the antiquated temples and mosques, even the dust of the village roads carried a secret; in them all was the Mother.

"I took strolls in the early winter mornings. I walked between the serried rows of dark, silent houses, as if spirit-haunted, standing on both sides of the dark and deserted road; and yet on them all was the light of my new vision. The music of distant jingling bells fastened to the neck of unseen bullocks; the sweet sound of the grinding hand-mills; the chatter of women at the village well—all made the chilly morning throb with rhythm; and in them all I found the grandeur of the Mother."

After forty-five years Munshiji with a lifetime of political experience thus proclaims his faith of Nationalism—as fresh as when Aravinda Ghosh proclaimed it in 1904:

"To those of us who have faith in Indian Nationalism, India is the Mother, not an estate to be divided. Its driving force has been the joy of suffering for the sake of the Mother, the divine *ananda* of self-immolation for her freedom, the bliss of union in death with the forbears of our race who have done so before us. We have felt almost physical delight in the touch of the soil from the Himalayas to Cape Camorin—the land of the Mother; in the kisses blown by the winds from over Indian seas; in hearing Indian speech, music and poetry, wherever found; in seeing the familiar sites, habits and manners of life in every corner of it. The pride in the Mother's past, the anguish at her present servitude, the passion for her future glory have been the breath of our life. To us nationalism is the realization of the Mother in the country; the contemplation, adoration and service of the Motherland as Divinity."

Munshiji's incursion into politics was welcomed by his mother who evinced great interest in public matters. The son would freely talk to her all about the court and the judges, and of politics, Besant, Tilak, Das, Gandhiji and the mother would listen to him with deep interest. She even identified herself with the ideals and actions of her only son. She was

the first to encourage the son's reformist zeal by setting an example herself. In 1918, she a widow of sixty, came into public, welcomed Lokamanya Tilak on behalf of the women of Broach. In the evening of January 3, 1932, in spite of her age and physical weakness, she attended Gandhiji's prayers. When Gandhiji was leaving the grounds he asked her whether she was prepared for her son's going to jail again. With a charming directness, she replied, "I have entrusted my son to you."

Munshiji's interest in Arya Samaj dates from his early youth. In about 1905 or 1906 in an article he wrote on Dayanand Saraswati he observed:

> "If there be any sect in which Nationalism is taught, where the foundation of future Aryavarta is laid, not by talk but by sacrifice, self-abnegation and enthusiasm, it is the Arya Samaj."

He saw in Dayanand the spirit of resurgent Hinduism at its highest. Still Dayanand is to him one of the modern masters of Indian Culture:

> "He gave us the first programme of Cultural reintegration, most of which has now been associated with Nationalism; removal of caste distinction and untouchability, and, equality of women; highest scientific education grafted on an education essentially Indian; the use of national language and the pursuit of Sanskrit as a predominant national influence; repudiation of Westernism; re-organisation of life on a basis of freedom as in Vedic times and a sturdy resistance against foreign rule and alien culture."

In 1907, he was present when the Congress broke into two, his sympathies all being Shri Aravinda.

II

THE BUDDING POLITICIAN

When the World War I broke out in 1914, young Munshi in order to voice his then exuberant nationalism assisted Shri Indulal Yagnik in bringing out a Gujarati monthly *Navjivan* and *Satya*. In that year he joined the Presidency Association

been dominated by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. He soon entered its executive council with Shri Jamnadas Dwarkadas.

In September 1915, Mrs. Besant launched the Home Rule Movement in Bombay with a speech on 'India after the War'. That speech impressed Munshiji deeply and practically drew him into active political life. Along with Shri Jamnadas he decided to start a weekly paper. On the advice of Mrs. Besant, and with the blessings of Maharshi Dadabhoy Navroji and Rt. Hon'ble Shri Srinivasa Sastri, *Young India* was started on November 17, 1915. Shri Jamnadas and he were its first editors, but he resigned in January due to certain differences.

It was in 1915 when Gandhiji returned from South Africa that Munshiji had his first glimpse of the one who was to be his Master. Years ago when Mr. H. S. L. Polak had told him that not one of the Indian leaders was 'fit to hold a candle to Mr. Gandhi' he, the devout disciple of Shri Aravinda Ghose, had felt deeply hurt. And here he came, the new leader, bare-footed, simply dressed—the very image of insignificance! Munshiji following many leaders of the day, no doubt, was proud of Gandhiji's achievements but believed that he would soon find his level in India.

Munshiji's patriotism did not conflict with his ardent love for his Gujarat. He wrote in 1915:

> "Gujarat is a giant tree. In its roots are secreted the *karma yoga* of Shri Krishna and on its branches have sprouted forth Dayanand and Gandhiji."

His interest in the history of Gujarat was stimulated by Shri Ranjitram Vavabhai, who was then collecting materials for a history of Gujarat. Munshiji shared Shri Ranjitram's determined belief that Gujarat will attain glory through its literature.

Thus the consciousness of Gujarat, as a living cultural entity, became a great force in his life, a force that has sustained him through the vicissitudes of his literary and public life. This provincial patriotism, in Munshiji's case, instead of limiting his nationalism, strengthened it.

By 1916, the Home Rule League had come to be accepted as a part of the Congress and Mr. Jinnah, as the President of its Bombay Branch, had come to the fore as a fervant champion of Hindu-Muslim unity. Munshiji was one of the most active members of the Bombay branch, and later its Secretary.

But the Mesopotamian muddle, the subsequent debates in the House of Commons during one of which Mr. Montague characterised the Services as 'wooden', his appointment, later, as Secretary of State for India, and his famous Declaration of August 20, 1917, announcing responsible government as India's goal—all these raised the Home Rule Leaguers' hope and spurred them on to more intensive activity. When Montague came down to India in 1917 Munshiji was on the drafting Sub-Committee of the League for a representation to be submitted to him.

In these days Munshiji came into closer contact with the inspiring personality of Mrs. Besant. Her tremendous organising power, eloquence, zeal and devotion held him fascinated for a considerable time. But Gandhiji had already entered the arena. He was forging a new technique and gathering round himself a band of devout followers. On May 25, 1915, Gandhiji founded the Sabarmati Ashram. His novel technique of Satyagraha was already drawing public attention. Already he had several successful struggles against authority—on South Africa's indentured Indian labour, at Champaran, in Kaira and in the industrial strike at Ahmedabad in the same year; and Mrs. Besant was already taking a second place in the minds of some of the young lions of the Home Rule League.

Differences were already becoming acute in the Congress with Mrs. Besant favouring a settlement with the British. And when a special session of the Congress met at Bombay to deliberate over the Montford Reforms, Munshiji was among those youngsters who worked behind the scenes. His doubts about the 'unpractical' Mahatma still persisted, so that when in July 1918, Gandhiji started a Satyagraha Committee, Munshiji was one of the last to yield to the proposal that Gandhiji should be elected President of the All-India Home Rule League.

At a meeting of the Council of the Home Rule League (he was then the Secretary) Munshiji along with others held out for boycott of British goods against Gandhiji's proposal of Swadeshism. Gandhiji told them that political success could be achieved only by love, not by hatred. According to others, without the leaven of hatred which boycott implied, no movement was possible. Gandhiji threatened resignation in case the programme of boycott was adopted. "A superman was on the scene" as Munshiji remarked. The notes which he prepared for a speech on the occasion shows the protestant strain of Aravindian programme.

> "Certain minds shrink from aggressive action, as if it were sin. They turn away from the delight of battle, look upon it as monstrous. Love is foreign to political action. Between nation and nation there may be justice or partiality; not love. To say that boycott shows want of love, is bad psychology and bad morality. It is directed not against the individual but against the policy which exploits you. If hatred is demoralising, it is stimulating too. If hatred comes, let it come as a stimulus, as an awakening. The issue of violence does not arise; it is a matter of expediency. Violence which brings us into conflict with the rulers may be inexpedient for a race circumscribed as ours; but that violence is to be ruled out *per se* is not politics."

It must have been some satisfaction to Munshiji later that under Gandhian Satyagraha, boycott played as important a part as he wanted it to play in 1918.

Munshiji was engaged to represent the people's case before the Hunter Committee appointed to inquire into the Jallianwala Baug Massacre. But later under Gandhiji's influence it was decided to boycott the Commission.

In Christmas of 1919, the Amritsar Congress met under the conflicting shadows of the Montford Reforms and Jallianwala Baug. The Subjects Committee, of which Munshiji was a member was the most momentous he had so far attended. A resolution was moved condemning both the massacre of Jallianwala Baug and the mad frenzy of the crowds during the Amritsar riots. The hearts of those of Munshiji's way of thinking

revolted at the latter part of the resolution. Was the killing of a couple of Europeans to be placed on the same level with the cold-blooded massacre of hundreds of innocent men and women?

The latter part of the resolution was lost, what with the big guns of the old school all opposing. But Gandhiji persisted. Next day the discussion was reopened, and accepted in its original form. "The old guard was routed, Gandhiji was left in possession of the field, its unquestioned master" notes Munshiji.

Gandhiji's policy of non-co-operation was, however, incomprehensible to Munshiji. In July 1920, Gujarat Rajkiya Sabha declared the boycott of legislatures. But to Munshiji's way of political thinking, again, it appeared a wrong course. India needed the legislatures. Had he not discarded the revolutionary faith in 1908-1909? He knew that Gandhiji was out for boycott of legislatures and therefore his would be a cry in the wilderness. But he sent a note on the subject and thought it his duty to do so. It shows his faith in parliamentary activities, which has persisted throughout in spite of his following the lead of Gandhiji in 1930.

With the Amritsar Congress, Gandhiji hypnotised the whole country. Lokamanya had died on 1st August 1919. And the Calcutta Congress adopted his non-co-operation policy in September 1920. He desired to alter the name of 'Home Rule League' into 'Swaraj Sabha' and to replace the words "Constitutional means" by "Peaceful and legitimate measures" in the League Constitution. Munshiji then belonged to Jinnah-Jayakar group, opposed to Gandhiji's. Munshiji and Shri Divatia (now Sir Harsiddhabhai) suggested an amendment, viz., 'to attain Swarajya as provided by Art. 1 of the Congress constitution'. The amendment was lost by 20 against 45. The rift was growing. On 5th October 1920, 20 members resigned from the League. Among the twenty were Jinnah, Jayakar, Shri Divatia and Munshiji.

When Gandhiji started his political experiments and had the whole country at his feet, Munshiji with many others of greater importance saw great risk in them. His zeal for revo-

lution had long since vanished. He had come to believe firmly that if the institutional continuity of India was broken, it would prove ruinous to the country's interests. That faith has survived all the political campaigns that have since shook the whole country from end to end.

In December 1920, the Congress met at Nagpur. Munshiji visited the Congress for what he then thought the last time. He saw that Gandhiji had transformed the Congress beyond recognition within two years. New khaddar clad leaders from every province had flocked there.

"My turn had not come; and I left the Congress" he says in *I Follow the Mahatma.*

III

IN THE COUNCIL—BUILDER AND CRITIC

The politician in Munshiji was fast maturing against the background of the Gandhian phenomenon, which in its broad sweep and peculiar grandeur held him firm in its grip but did not yet absorb him. "Gandhiji was a phenomenon which compelled admiration," he wrote in *I Follow the Mahatma,* "but to me he remained incomprehensible . . . To me his principles appeared unconvincing, and his methods reactionary".

This incomprehension on his part verged on fear. So much so that when he was asked to see Gandhiji in connection with the Gujarat Vidya Pitha he was "too afraid to go near him"!

Munshiji, however, had seen the star rising in the East. He was noting with genuine pride the great influence which Gandhiji was already wielding. All Gujarat was astir with a new life under Gandhiji's inspiration and was consolidating the 'triple partnership' of the Gujarati politician, businessman and peasant. And even the sceptic in Munshiji could not resist the call to "put into port". It was possibly that irresistible call that won over his natural temerity and prompted him in 1926, to meet Gandhiji and ask him not to oblige certain groups in the Sahitya Parishad, the Gujarati Literary Conference, who

wanted to exploit the Mahatma's name in their attempt to resist Munshiji's reorganisation schemes.

Those were the days when personal worries were already casting their shadows on Munshiji's horizon, often blurring his vision. Literary efforts served as a great relief. But more, the literary man in him was already blossoming on his own account in Gujarati novels and dramas.

In 1925, he was elected a Fellow of the Bombay University and in 1926, to the Bombay Legislative Council on an independent ticket. In the legislature constituted under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the duty of an elected member ordinarily confined to speech-making and his success to elocution prizes. In these Munshiji did exceedingly well, but he did more. In association with Shri Lalji Naranji he founded the Coalition Nationalist Party which became a formidable, though largely ineffective, force against the solid combine of the Communalists and the Officials. He helped the then Minister of Education, Dewan Bahadur Harilal Desai, to frame and pilot the University Bill. He certainly did not relish overmuch his largely fruitless role in the Council, sometimes patted on the back by the Government, at other times condemned by the very Government as "unpractical and visionary".

With all this, looking back to that period of Munshiji's life, there is evident to the observing eye a no mean record of legislative activity. On the very day he was sworn in, in the Bombay Legislative Council, as the member for the University, the Home Minister had hardly finished his speech on the Aden Civil and Criminal Justice Amendment Act, when up rose the new member with his own amendment. He was no mere listener waiting for the party whip's permission to speak. Basing himself on his experience as an advocate, he made the amendment the occasion for a plea for quicker and cheaper justice in Aden.

Munshiji's main contribution to Bombay legislation during the period of his membership of the Council was of course the University Bill, which in its later stages was actually piloted by him. The present Bombay University Act is thus mainly the result of Munshiji's unremitting labours which he undertook even at the risk of his reputation as an Independent.

For instance, when he defended the appointment of the Governor as the Chancellor instead of one elected by the Fellows of the University under the then prevailing circumstances, ultra-democrats chided him. One local paper went to the extent of writing a leading article under the title 'What is Mr. Munshi's Vocation?' and an obliging critic sent a cutting of it as a prize for Munshiji's alleged 'somersaults'. Evidently it was assumed by most men that in order to be a good democrat one had only to oppose the Government, whether right or wrong.

On the question of making the Governor of the province the Chancellor instead of one elected by the Senate, which was hastily supposed by his critics as a very undemocratic step, Munshiji showed how his contention was based on a thorough knowledge of procedure in the best universities of the world, and his opponents' on a confusion about nomenclature. In England, for example, he explained, the King retained the visitorial powers, while the elected Chancellor of a University there corresponded to the elected Vice-Chancellor here and consequently vesting of such powers in the Governor's office far from being anti-democratic was in the best traditions of British democracy.

Reporting Munshiji's speech opposing Shri Pradhan's amendment for an elected Chancellor, The *Times of India* wrote on July 27, 1927:

> "On the heels of this self-appointed representative of the University (Mr. K. F. Nariman) came the actual representative Mr. Munshi, who in unhesitating terms referred to 'the abyssmal ignorance' of those champions of democracy who knew nothing about the details of University education. He urged with eloquence that the essence of democracy was that the power of the Executive must not be interfered with, and those who clamoured for the elective right in such a case as this did not understand the very elements of a democratic constitution. For brevity, clarity and cogency the speech of Mr. Munshi was an excellent one and he certainly replied to all the arguments put forward by the opposition. He stood there for a principle and cared nothing for any man, in strange contrast to the unusual attitude of Mr. Nariman who seemed espe-

cially desirous of not getting into the bad books of His Excellency the Governor."

It was during one such defence of the Bill's provisions that Munshiji was twitted for his eloquent support to the University Bill which almost made it look as if he were himself its author. The interlude is interesting enough to bear reproduction here.

> *Noor Mahomed*: Is it relevant for the Honourable Member (Mr. Munshi) on this side, who is not a member of the Government, to describe what the policy of the Government is? I understand the Hon. Member representing the University . . . is describing the policy of the Government as an authority on the subject. I want to know whether he is qualified to do so?
>
> *S. K. Bole*: Sir, he is trying to say what he would have said if he had been occupying the Government benches (laughter).
>
> The retort for its promptness, and sharpness could have come from a Churchill.
>
> *K. M. Munshi*: I may tell my Hon. friend that what he has been doing all these years for any measure whatsoever, we are prepared to do in connection with this beneficial measure . . . . Not only in this measure, but in any measure where Government is prepared to fall in line with popular wishes. We are sent here not for the purpose of jeopardising the interest of our constituencies, not for the purpose of making Government impossible, not for the purpose of playing into the hands of those who are here for their own jobs. We are here, Sir, to speak in the name of the progressive people of this Presidency, and it is our right to say to the Government "we agree with you". In spite of the taunts and jibes which we hear, it is our privilege to give—if Government has justified its existence by bringing forward beneficial measures—the assistance of the public side. (p. 410. *Council Report*).

The Parliamentarian in Munshiji did not believe in opposition for the sake of opposition. His consciousness of his responsibilities towards the electorate did not allow him to indulge in theatricals, or, as he once said, in "rhetorical acrobatics or championing lost causes". With the people's welfare as his sole concern, all his forensic skill, eloquence and shattering re-

partee were used now against the Government, now against the chronic oppositionists, with equal vehemence and often unequalled effect.

On another occasion during the discussion on the University Bill, when Shri B. V. Jadhav came forward with an amendment seeking incorporation of the principle of communal representation in the Senate, Munshiji's ability to destroy his opponent's case by ridicule quickly asserted itself. "If a Eurasian engine driver brings us to Poona today", said Munshiji, "tomorrow it must be the turn of the non-Brahmin and the day after the turn of the Mahomedan!" Again, replying to the plea of those who would let the University be degraded from a shrine of learning to a bazaar for communal bargaining, and to the complaints of the communalists that the University is serving the selfish interests of a certain class of people, Munshiji agreed, only to retort: "That class is the class of scholars, the class of educationists, irrespective of race or creed or colour or religion."

During the hotly debated course of the Bill in the Council, and later in life as one actively connected with the University Munshiji as its chief pilot has fought for the principle recognised by all liberal educationists all over the world, that, to quote his own words, "the acquisition, spread and pursuit of knowledge is the only concern of the University", and that its controlling council should be a place for the best academicians only.

Lest we overlook Munshiji's role as a trenchant critic in the Council it is pertinent to recall his adjournment motion on the Bombay riots in February 1929.

After the Bardoli episode referred to later, returning triumphantly after his resignation and uncontested re-election, Munshiji was not content to be a mere spectator of the Bombay riots of February 1929. In the Council he moved an adjournment motion 'for the purpose of discussing the disturbances in Bombay'. The Hindu and Muslim members of the opposition came to an agreement demanding that a Committee of three members presided over by the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court should report on the origin and causes of the dis-

turbances, the extent of damage to life and property and the steps with reference to their adequacy and promptness taken by the Government in dealing with the disturbances and in protecting life and property of the citizens. But the then Home Member Mr. J. E. B. Hotson declined to accept this suggestion and the motion when put to vote was carried both by Hindu and Muslim votes. Thus the member who not long ago in connection with the University Bill was suspected of too great a friendliness for the Government was that day acclaimed as its strongest critic.

Munshiji's motion was, however, not utilised as merely an occasion for rhetorical denunciation or playing to the gallery as lesser men would have done. His chief aim was to bring home to the Government the fact that the Government's acts during such large scale disturbances should always be open to public scrutiny. "I consider it the duty of every executive Government in the civilised world", he said, "after taking such steps as they took during the last riots in Bombay, appoint an impartial tribunal to inquire into and report on the causes of these disturbances and to submit their own methods of its scrutiny."

Munshiji was one of the distinguished publicmen whom the Government of Bombay appointed in March 1928 as a member of a committee "to advise the Government regarding the steps which they are taking or will have to take in connection with the allegations of corruption made in the course of the Harvey-Nariman case or any other allegations of corruption in the Development Department."

The course of the famous Harvey-Nariman case was followed by the public with great interest not only because of the position which Shri Nariman came to occupy at that time as a popular leader, but also because of the extent to which he utilised the occasion to expose the corruption which was rampant in the Development Department. No wonder Munshiji was selected for it by the then Government along with Sir Cowasji Jehangir (Chairman), Husseinbhoy Laljee, Lalji Naranjee, K. F. Nariman and R. D. Bell (Secretary). Later Munshiji was appointed its Chairman.

As a result a Riots Inquiry Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Percival and the evidence given by Munshiji before the Committee is proof of his clear undertsanding of the problem and his unwillingness to mince matters.

He traced the causes of the riots to

(A) The communal policy of the British Government in India; and

(B) Inaction of the Government before and during the riots.

Referring in his evidence to the first cause Munshiji spoke these prophetic words:

> "So long as this policy continues such riots will occur with growing frequency. The chain of such riots forms a painful process by which the policy of Government is driving the people of India to form themselves into two determined and fanatic camps of highly bellicose individuals. The policy, it may be suggested, is intended not to have this effect, but that it is having this effect is indisputable."

Giving the minority community an undue preponderance in the counsels of the Government of Bombay, favouritism in the matter of jobs and partiality of the Government officials as a class to the aggressive claims of the minority constituted the Government's attitude which, he held, had developed a highly aggressive frame of mind in the Mussalmans. He testified in very minute details to the immediate effect of the communalist propaganda done by the Ali Brothers in Bombay, and to the unscrupulous manner in which a combination direct or implied between Muslim communalism and white bureaucracy which encouraged violence. The facile method of blaming the hooligans was discarded by him. He probed deeper and exposed the root causes which have since become quite evident to every right-thinking observer of the cause of communal riots in the country. Nor was he disposed to shift the burden of bringing peace to the shoulders of the unarmed public. He said, "I strongly hold the view that in times of riot the police man and the soldier should only have the right to attempt

restoration of peace." And, besides control of newspapers, he advocated more positive steps: 'That the steps taken by the authorities to restore law and order are not discriminative *per se* is not enough. People must *feel* that they are not discriminative.'

And it was given to Munshiji eight years later to put those views in practice, and thereby to be accepted as the Home Member in the country, his name a bye-word for Law and Order in every mouth.

Another activity to which he was called upon to contribute his quota was Primary and Secondary Education in the Province. On 7th October 1927 the Government of Bombay appointed him as a member of the Committee "to consider and report on (*a*) the reorganisation of primary and secondary school course with a view to their proper co-ordination and the removal of the duplication of studies in the vernacular and English, and (*b*) the introduction of vocational and industrial training in primary and secondary schools". He was also appointed a member of the Physical Education Committee whose work in this sphere can be legitimately said to have inaugurated Bombay's scheme for physical education.

IV

THE BARDOLI AFFAIR

Notwithstanding his achievements as a legislator, Munshiji's was not a soul that could be confined to the narrow bounds of an ineffective anachronism like the Legislative Council under Dyarchy. Communalism was at a premium, and votes could be sold and bought on the floor of the house or in the party room with as much ease as *garam chana* in any Bombay street. The Coalition National Party, a solid bloc of about thirty members which Munshiji hed helped to found and guide, found themselves either helpless tilter at the Government's windmill or willing instrument in the hands of some astute Government Member. And to Munshiji particularly, it would have been galling to move in the monotonous rut of a legislative activity which amounted to little more than empty speech-making. To

live on alternating kicks and kisses from the Government benches, or frequent and fulsome cheers from his non-official colleagues was too poor a satisfaction to a man like Munshiji. He itched for action. He fretted and fumed at his own ineffectiveness.

If anything proved to Munshiji the futility of the Council, it was Bardoli. On a question like the unwarranted enhancement of land revenue against which the peasants of Bardoli and their representatives had been carrying on, in vain, a campaign of protest since 1925, the elected members, particularly those representing Bardoli, worked hard to grant relief to peasants. But with scarcely any result. In September 1927, Munshiji moved the following resolution on Bardoli:

> "This Council recommends to Government that the revised Land Revenue assessments in the Chorasi and Bardoli Talukas of the Surat District, sanctioned by Government, should not be given effect to."

But Bardoli was already the scene of the Mahatma's activity. It was preparing the rude jolt which it later gave to all India and to British prestige. To Munshiji it gave an opportunity for that active public service which has always been his aim. The phenomenon which only compelled admiration at first was now becoming comprehensible to him and he was actively responding to the irresistible call described in a Christian hymn:

"Put into port, the shoals are calling,
Come where the light house gleams,
Come in to rest, and furl your souls,
And lose yourself in dreams".

During the initial stages of the Bardoli Satyagraha under Sardar Vallabhbhai's leadership Munshiji, like many others who failed to realize the full significance of the movement was disinclined to throw away even the slender chances of doing some good turn in the legislature in co-operation with the Ministers. He was, therefore, disinclined to join a campaign which, he was convinced, was bound to end in a ridiculous failure be-

cause of what he conceived to be its fantastic principle of non-violence.

In Munshiji's case, his association with the then Education Minister, D. B. Harilal Desai on the issue of reorganising the primary education of the province acted as an additional deterrent. No veiled threats from partisans of the movement nor the resignation of many members of Gujarat from the Council on the Bardoli issue could influence him. As late as 19th April 1928 D. B. Harilal Desai wrote to him a letter which shows the cautious attitude usual with those in power.

> "Just as you had a threat from Mr. ...... I had one from .... asking me to exercise all my influence to solve the Bardoli tangle. I am doing all I can. Mr. V. J. Patel, who is now in Bombay, may be pulling the strings for the latest development. Things have to be done tactfully."

Needless to say, neither the cajolery from one side nor the cautious counsel from the other influenced him much. Caution scarcely deters Munshiji from following his self-appointed path, and fear never; and so it was in this. On the contrary, the fast moving events of Bardoli were reacting on his mind with increased vigour. In May 1928, news from Bardoli was definitely disturbing even to one who was having a holiday at Panchgani. Report came to him of Pathan mercenaries being employed by the Government to strike terror into the minds of the Satyagrahi men and women of Gujarat. The member for Bombay University could not find easy sleep when his brothers and sisters were facing the harshness of an unjust exercise of power in their struggle for what they considered their very legitimate rights. He decided to raise his voice on their behalf. And then began his widely known effort to get the Government to come to a settlement with the riots.

On May 27, 1928, he wrote to Sir Leslie Wilson, then Governor. To him the most urgent issue was the extraordinary measures taken by the Government against a peaceful agitation. That letter started the correspondence, which while tracing for us the early history of the negotiations that ended in the success of the Bardoli struggle, showed the reactionaries of the

constitutionalist in Munshjii to a problem that was fast becoming incapable of 'constitutional' solutions. His letter to the Governor on May 27, reads:

"Girivilas", Panchgani,
27th May, 1928.

Dear Sir Leslie,

I write this letter with reference to Bardoli affairs with great reluctance, as personal appeals are very often considered out of place in matters which have assumed the proportions of a political controversy. But I feel that I would be failing in my duty if I did not indicate the unwholesome aspect which matters there appear to be assuming.

I did not accompany some of the members of the Legislative Council who waited upon you in this connection at Mahableshwar, as I considered that with non-co-operators threatening non-payment of taxes, it was not for constitutionalists sympathising with such a movement to bring pressure on Your Excellency to accede to wishes backed by it. In my humble opinion, however, the demand for an impartial inquiry was neither excessive nor unreasonable; and concession in this behalf even now, would be prompt and dignified, and, if I may venture to add, a highly judicious act on the part of Government, and in full accord with sympathetic traditions of your regime.

I address this letter to Your Excellency as the issue in Bardoli is altering its aspect. Whether the wishes of the Bardoli ryots for an independent re-inquiry should be granted in one issue; whether the rights of Government are to be enforced at all costs against a peaceful agitation in respect of what they consider a legitimate administrative grievance is another. The line between the strictness of law and the determined rigour of a vindictive assertion of rights is, as Your Excellency would agree, at all times, difficult to be maintained when one of the parties, as in the case of Government, has the power to enforce. And I would expect Your Excellency's Government to do its utmost to maintain this line. The employment of Pathans, Special Magistrates, the Communal aspect which the payment of dues is made to assume, the tales of molestation which are reported, do look as if the officials are likely, may be unwittingly, to ignore this line, even if they have

not done so up till now:—an action which, I am sure, must be farthest from Your Excellency's intentions in this matter.

Hence, it is that I wish to appeal to Your Excellency's statesmanship to take early measures to see that one issue may not be converted into another.

Hoping to be excused for the trouble.

Yours Sincerely,
K. M. Munshi

The Governor's reply dated May 29, stressed the "generosity" of the Government and appealed to the constitutionalist for upholding the authority of the Government as against those who sought to defy it.

Government House,
Mahableshwar.
May 29, 1928.

My dear Mr. Munshi,

I received your letter of the 27th inst. yesterday through Mr. Ker, and am glad you wrote to me on the Bardoli question, which is being much misunderstood from every aspect.

2. I understand from your letter—for you definitely say so—that those who believe in constitutional government should take no part in a movement which threatens non-payment of taxes. I regret to say that there is no doubt, in my mind, that, in the case of Bardoli, a definite attempt is being made to coerce Government by the use of the weapon of civil disobedience, and you can hardly be surprised if Government feels bound to take up such a challenge thrown down, although it is very deeply to be regretted that this means action which spells grave hardships for the unfortunate agriculturists in the Taluka—but that is due to no fault of Government.

3. A study of the facts and figures of the re-assessment must convince any fair-minded man that Government has acted more than reasonably, and very generously, in the question of reassessment, and I can assure you that, had I any doubts as to the justice of the figures, I should not hesitate to say so. Every opportunity has been given, as in all cases of re-assessment of land values, to those who took objection to them to bring forward their cases, and all cases have been very carefully considered.

4. There has been no vindictive assertion of rights on our part. A great deal of untruth has been stated and written about the Pathans (of whom only about 40 are employed in the whole of the Bardoli Taluka) whom you mention. If those who are preaching and practising civil disobedience had allowed the *Khedut*s and others to do their proper work, it would not have been necessary to have brought anyone in from outside; but they have not been so allowed, and have been terrorized into refusal to carry out their duties. The tales of molestation to which you allude are hopelessly exaggerated, and, it is impossible without an inner knowledge of what is going on, for anyone to properly appreciate the situation.

5. I think you know me well enough to realise that, if I thought that Government were in the wrong, or were acting harshly, in any way, I would personally interfere at once. My Government and I are fully acquainted with every aspect of the case, both from the Government point of view and from the point of view of those who are advising and organising this civil disobedience. I also am fully aware of all the details of the question of re-assessment.

6. There is, however, a very large question involved in the action taken by those who have advised, and are advising, the unfortunate victims of this campaign, and, as a constitutionalist, I am sure you will support Government, which is unanimous in the action it is taking, consistent with a just assertion of its rights—to carry out its undoubted duty of upholding the authority of Government as against those who apparently claim that they can, with impunity, defy that authority. If you are not satisfied at any time that Government is, in no way, acting vindictively or unfairly, I should be prepared to arrange for you a meeting with the Secretary, Revenue Department, who would gladly explain any question.

7. With regards to your remarks about an impartial enquiry, I am convinced myself that no further enquiry could elicit any further facts; and I may point out that an almost impossible position will be reached if, after the fullest enquiry, after the objections to any re-assessment have been received, and after these have all been carefully considered, another enquiry in every case of re-assessment is to be undertaken. In addition to the consideration given to the Bardoli case, mentioned in para 3 above, it is a fact, however, that a further enquiry has been made, for it so

happened that Mr. Rieu, the Revenue Member, went on leave, and Mr. Hatch has gone through all the papers with an entirely independent mind, and has come definitely to the conclusion, leaving aside rental values altogether (a basis to which objection has been taken), that increase of assessment proposed by Government is very low, and that Government is more than justified, by the figures of prices, sales, etc., in increasing the assessment as it has done and that, if any further enquiry were to be made, such enquiry would result in raising the assessment instead of lowering it. I can assure you that there is not one member of Government who is not fully satisfied as to the justice of Government's action—and, in fact, I should really use the word generosity.

8. The people in Bardoli know themselves that Government have been generous, and they want to pay. They are now paying quietly, but dare not let it be known—for fear of persecution. Many people are coming forward to buy the forfeited lands, and they would not do so if the assessment were so high as is made out.

9. I have written you fully, as I want you to understand the situation.

Yours sincerely,
LESLIE WILSON

* * *

Munshiji replying to it on June 1, maintained his plea for an enquiry at least for allowing the Government's 'generosity' to be recognised as such and emphasised that even constitutionists cannot easily put up with unjustifiable actions of the Government against the just claims of the people.

111, Esplanade Road,
Fort, Bombay.
1st June, 1928.

My dear Sir Leslie,

I am much obliged to you for your detailed reply as well as the courtesy which underlies it. The events which are happening in connection with Bardoli and the public feeling with which I came into contact after coming to Bombay, induce me once more to supplement the submissions which I made in my previous letter. I do it in the hope, that the views of those who do not believe in complete estrangement between the people and Government may not be unwelcome to you.

2. I must confess to a keen sense of disappointment at the decision 'to see through' which judging from Your Excellency's letter and the note published in yesterday's papers, Government appear to have arrived at. It may be that the situation is not due to any fault of Government. But, after all that is not everything. This decision will result either in the elimination of the existing agriculturists in Bardoli or in bloodshed; and in either case, will result if in nothing else, in deep and lasting embitterment. And I cannot help feeling, that this result will be too disproportionate to the issue, viz., the demand for re-inquiry. Even admitting, what Your Excellency is pleased to state, that the reassessment has been generous, an opportunity of allowing it to be recognised as just should not have been denied.

3. I note your Excellency's observation as regards the inquiry having been made as it happens by Mr. Hatch in the absence of Mr. Rieu; but that gives me greater confidence to urge it upon Your Excellency that if the results of this independent inquiry have been as Your Excellency says they are, then Government could not possibly have anything to lose by conceding the demand for an independent inquiry. At the same time I need hardly impress upon Your Excellency the moral effect which such a concession will produce upon the people in general.

4. I deeply deplore that when a little gesture of solicitude will perhaps end the matter, Government have for the time being decided not to obtain anything but an unconditional surrender from the Bardoli people, and thus, at the instance of those for whom the penalties of Government have no dread, compel the weakest Taluka in Gujarat to learn the lessons of Civil Disobedience. Some of us in the Council who were making attempts to bring about a sympathetic understanding between Government and the party of progressive politicians in the Council regret this situation most, as their efforts will be seriously handicapped.

5. As regards the other issue which I consider graver, permit me respectfully to urge that no Indian constitutionalist however determined, can look with equanimity, when for the enforcement of ordinary *Japti* claims, Government employes foreign mercenaries, who in our parts of the country have been more often than not associated with lawless activities. May I draw Your Excellency's attention to the fearful implications logically involved in this act, viz., (*a*) that the Government with its vast re-

sources cannot get decent Indian to work out its policy in this matter, and (*b*) that the Government even in a small revenue matter like this is prepared to resort to such an unusual agency to carry out its policy? These implications have a tendency to alter, as I have already submitted, the very nature of the controversy and I am afraid will exasperate public feeling so as to make it difficult for any Indian entitled to any respect in public life—so much so to keep an open mind in the matter.

6. I trust Your Excellency will excuse me the length and the freedom with which I have indulged in the privilege of expressing my points of view, and appreciate the motive which has compelled me to trespass upon your valuable time.

Yours sincerely,
K. M. Munshi

Sir Leslie's reply dated 5th June while expressing 'worry' over the question was scarcely helpful in Munshiji's efforts to bring about an understanding.

Government House,
Mahableshwar,
5th June, 1928.

Dear Mr. Munshi,

I received your letter of the 1st June yesterday about Bardoli, and I am afraid that you evidently do not realise the position of Government. I am very worried about this question, particularly about the position of the agriculturists, who, I know well, would all pay up the assessment, as many are now doing, if they were allowed to.

2. Government have pursued, in the case of Bardoli, exactly the same procedure as in every other re-assessment. There have been many re-assessments put in force since I have been here and I ask myself, why has Bardoli been picked out for this effort in civil disobedience --for the present proceedings up there are nothing less. Why not Chorasi, for instance, in the same area, where the re-assessment was made at the same time and is even higher than that of Bardoli?

3. Why should Government give up its undoubtful right of administration to, as you suggest, the decision of some independent Committee? I am anxious to meet the situation in every way that is possible, but no Government can concede the right of private individuals to usurp the

functions of Government, and no Government would be worth the name of Government, which allowed such a thing to happen.

4. This is not a question of a 'little gesture of solicitude', but a question in which a matter of most important principle is involved and surely you must see this. We are asking for no unconditional surrender. We are only asking for the people of one Taluka of the Presidency to obey the ordinary laws. If, when they have done so, they wanted further satisfaction than that which we have already tried to give them that there has been no injustice, I can see little difficulty in giving them that satisfaction. There has never been any case of re-assessment of land values similar to this before, where so much consideration and reconsideration has been given to the re-assessment, and so many arguments listened to, and so much done to meet any reasonable objections. Nor has there ever been a case in which objection to paying increased assessment which objection naturally is felt by anyone who has to pay higher taxation in any form—has given rise to such steps against Government as have been taken in Bardoli.

5. I am most anxious to take any step possible to Government to bring this present state of affairs to an end, for I am particularly anxious that no further hardships shall fall on the agriculturists themselves.

6. Government has kept most strictly to all legal methods. A great deal of misunderstanding has arisen about the Pathans, of whom only 25 are employed and those under the strick superintendence of Government officials. Their conduct has been excellent, I am informed, in every way; and they were only so employed—being supplied for the work which they have been doing from Bombay—because the local *vethias* were not allowed to do their ordinary tasks. However, to remove any misunderstanding, these Pathans are now being removed, and Indians employed to do the work which they have been doing.

7. I hope you will appreciate Government's position, and I feel confident that, if you do, you will keep an open mind on this matter; and if you do this, I feel sure also that you will do anything you can to assist Government in a difficult position—which is due to no fault of theirs.

8. I might, incidentally, mention (but this is a minor point) that it is not necessarily a fact that all Pathans are non-Indians. I would also add to the fourth paragraph above that, of course, if, on re-examination of the assess-

ment after the taxes had been paid, if it were found that any mistakes had been made which resulted in unfairness to the cultivators, remissions would be made, as has been done previously in one case which recurs to my memory.

9. Should you desire to use this letter, or my former letter, in any way, you are perfectly at liberty to do so. Much misunderstanding has been created in this case. All my colleagues and I are only anxious for a settlement and to avoid any suffering for the cultivators. I have written a long letter to the President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, which explains all the steps which we took to endeavour to satisfy all the objections raised, and it may interest you to see a copy of that letter, which I attach.

10. Government is willing to consider any reasonable suggestions, as you will have gathered from this letter.

Yours sincerely,
LESLIE WILSON

V

THE CHAMPION OF BARDOLI

In his *Story of Bardoli* the late Shri Mahadeo Desai made a reference to Munshiji as one of the prominent public men who evinced deep interest in the Bardoli question:

> Among the public men who evinced an interest in the Bardoli question and tried to help the peasants' cause, Sjt. K. M. Munshi's name deserves prominent mention. We shall have to speak at length about him in a later chapter. It is sufficient to note here that towards the end of May he addressed a number of letters to His Excellency Sir Leslie Wilson, and laid especial emphasis on the fact that he had written the letters as a strict constitutionalist and not "as a non-co-operator threatening non-payment of taxes." It was perhaps because he strictly defined his position, that he was able to draw the Governor out.

And Gandhiji himself had the following remarks in his *Young India* on the point of constitutionalism which Munshiji emphasised as the basis of his stand in his correspondence with the Governor.

> And when the British lion is in a fury in British India, God help the 'gentle Hindu'. Well, God does help the



During the days of Budoli Satyagraha (In the cart Sudar Vallabhbhai Shri Munshiji, Smt Munshi)

helpless. The people of India have found in satyagraha the God-given infallible *Rambana* of self-suffering. Under its stimulating influence the people are slowly waking up from the lethargy of ages. The Bardoli peasants are but showing India that, weak as they are, they have got the courage to suffer for their convictions.

It is too late in the day to call satyagraha unconstitutional. It will be unconstitutional when Truth and its fellow, Self-Sacrifice become unlawful.

"I wish both His Excellency the Governor and Sjt. Munshi will take note of these facts that have happened within the past fourteen years. Satyagraha in Bardoli cannot now be suddenly declared unconstitutional. The fact is the Government have no case. They do not want their revenue policy to be challenged at an open inquiry. If the Bardoli people can stand the final heat, they will have the open inquiry or the withdrawal of the enhancement."

In the very nature of things Munshiji could not remain content with drawing the Governor's attention to the urgency of the situation in Bardoli. He visited Bardoli in June 1928 and saw for himself the forces at work and the issues at stake. Above all, he saw with his own eyes the grand phenomenon of Gandhism in action. The tremendous vitality released in the ordinary peasants of Bardoli of both sexes by one whom he was at one time disposed to look upon as a visionary, impressed the visitor to such an extent as to influence the rest of his life. The impact of this new force is effectively described in his own words:

For the first time, I realized the tremendous power which Gandhiji possessed of trans-valuing values. He was an alchemist of life and had, above all, the unwavering self-confidence of a prophet. Because of him, Truth and Non-violence—only words of moral import till then—had come to be accepted as principles of practical statesmanship. Thick, unbleached Khadi had become the symbol of refinement and culture, and grim self-abnegation had come to characterize luxury-loving. Intrigues had given way to fearlessness. Fastidiousness had been transformed into unflinching heroism. Effective organization had altered the basis of politics. Little Bardoli had become a byword for

limitless heroism. Who can escape the effects of this alchemy?

This alchemist, not unlike the ancient sage Dadhichi, knew the art of forging thunderbolts out of bones. Our cowardice and unsteadiness, our helplessness and fatalism, passing through the fire of this discipline came out as satyagraha. The underlying logic was peculiar to the man.

He argued:

"True, we have no arms. Equally true it is that, in order to achieve our objective we cannot kill our opponent. But surely we can die to secure it.

Someone tries to get us to do a thing by force; we refuse to do it; and he kills us. Who is the conqueror?

He or we? Most certainly we!

We are the conquerors, for he could not get us to do what he wanted.

It was a curious outlook but a sound one.

To make a solemn resolution, to adhere to it with Truth and Non-violence, to carry it out with unflinching determination, to die but not to yield: these were some of the simple lessons which he taught. Victory and death both being revalued in them.

In them lay the power to conquer fear."

(*I Follow the Mahatma*).

After seeing with his own eyes what was happening in Bardoli in the name of land revenue rights of the Government, in an interview to the *Pioneer* Munshiji repeated his earlier characterisation of Bombay Land Revenue Code 'as the most unholy legislative enactment which the British Government placed on the Statute Book'. But at the same time he was anxious not to let Bardoli become an all-India affair. He once warned the public against certain sections of the press who 'would turn Bardoli affair into a Russian revolution, invite armies and aeroplanes to destroy the harmless peasants and raise a political conflagration in the whole country.'

Thus at last the ship was calling to port. Was it the British prestgie manifesting itself in the stern and unrelenting stand of the Bombay Government in Bardoli, that was drawing him to the Gandhian fold? Or was it the magnetism of the Gandhian personality and the innate strength of this new philosophy of resistance? Whatever it be, he had come, he had seen, he had

been conquered. He grasped with both hands this new 'power to conquer power'.

"We leave our sadness and unrest
Blown by the restless tide;
We climb a hill of love to find
Our crosses glorified."

In Bardoli, the Gandhian phenomenon was embodied above all men in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Munshiji's active association with the Sardar, whom he on a later occasion described as 'the man of steel' began in the battlefield that was Bardoli. As the chief evangelist of the Mahatmic gospel of 'Conquest of Death', he preached, put fire into the peasants' souls and steeled them in the fight with the rare lone weapon of Soul Force. In *I Follow the Mahatma* (pp. 28-29) Munshiji thus describes the Sardar's preachings in Bardoli.

> The Sardar, under the inspiration of his Master, gave new values to old beliefs. All his life, the peasant had slaved at his land, paying land revenue, and living under the fond delusion that the land was his. But someone had now risen who would reassess the values of his life altogether.
>
> The Sardar preached: Tillers of soil are not the dependants of Government; it is Government that subsists on them. All fiats of authority need not be accepted by the people; it is Government which flourishes on popular will. Better to die than to pay land revenue.
>
> And every village in Bardoli swore, by all it held sacred that it would suffer extinction rather than pay this unjust levy of land revenue.
>
> Sardar had unique experience of civic and public life, of the bloody riots of Ahmedabad, of the non-violent struggle of Nagpur, of political manœuvres and the Non-co-operation of Gandhiji. A seasoned warrior, he knew the weakness of the officials as well as the strength of the people. He could make men dance to his tune. His steel had passed through the fire of the alchemist and come out with a finer edge. He had the great general's discerning eye for the true and the loyal, for the enemy, for the traitor and the obstructionist. The art of managing men he knew, and knew well. But much as he loved to concentrate power in his hands, he invariably submitted to Gandhiji's wishes.

> Under his direction, the leaders of Gujarat, trained in the school of Gandhiji, assumed the charge of various positions in accordance with their experience and calibre. He stamped out difference of opinion, discussions and rivalries among them. Different ashrams were converted into camps, the workers became leaders. The word of the Sardar became the gospel of Bardoli.
>
> (*I Follow the Mahatma*, pp. 28-29).

Munshiji saw the might of the mightiest empire on earth being challenged by mere men but with the mightier weapon of soul force. The terror of the Raj increased but with it also the tiny peasant's titanic will. The Commissioner had characterised their leaders as 'a swarm of agitators living on the people of Bardoli'. But the people themselves believed otherwise. They were the heroes and heroines moulded by Gandhism out of mere clay. The spirit of defiance was astir. Enthusiasm was reaching the meekest, remotest corner of the villages. Could it fail to react on the life and the positive personality of Munshiji?

His aloofness now troubled him. His isolation from the surging tide, of popular revolt, was artificial and could not last long or stand the test of his own self-analysis.

The nature of the thoughts that agitated him then is thus described by him:

> Why did I not resign my seat on the Council? Was it the unconscious lure of some official favour with which to satisfy my conceit? Or was it the fear of personal sufferings which association with Gandhiji implied? Was I justified in standing aloof from this heroic struggle? I hated myself for these conflicting emotions, threw mere prudence to the winds and decided to resign.

The die was being cast. Munshiji was in the struggle. He wrote to the Government on 17th June 1928 what he saw in Bardoli. That letter also contained his resignation from the council. The change over was the beginning of a new life.

His letter to the Bombay Governor, besides being of historical importance to the course of the Bardoli struggle, also marks his conversion to the Gandhian faith and that painful process of a constitutionalist's transformation into an agitator,

hastened by the friction which contact between an irresponsible and irresponsive Government and its people involves.

(vide Sec. I—*Landmark Letters*).

In the words of the late Mahadev Desai, this letter "sent a thrill through the hearts of all who had any fellow feel ng for their compatriots and placed the Bardoli question in the forefront of all questions engaging public attention".

Besidse Munshiji several members of the Legislative Council had already resigned in protest against repression. They formed themselves into a committee with Munshiji as Chairman and Shri B. G. Kher (now the Bombay Prem'er) as Secretary to inquire into the coercive measures adopted by the Government. Rao Bahadur Bhimbhai Naik, Dr. M. D. D. G.lder (now Minister of Public Health in Bombay) Shri Shivdasani and Shri Chandrachud were the other members. Fear of a rest did not prevent the Committee from visiting Bardoli week after week, examining witnesses, and collecting evidence. The investigation work reduced the vigour of the repression and also gave its members an opportunity to study the whole land revenue policy of British rule, a policy which Munshiji found, had as its principal feature 'the rule not of law, not of well-defined statutory rights and obligations, but of the Distr:ct Officer's discretion ...... which was limited by the officer's knowledge of the district and coloured by his prejudices and passions; a discretion which more often than not was sure of being approved by people at the head of the Executive, who, if an emergency arose, would be backed up by the vaunted might of the British Empire."

Munshiji's self-imposed task was not merely to support his charges against the Government with evidence furnished by the Committee and to expose to public light that illegal processes that were being resorted to in Bardoli by a panicky Government. He had by his famous letter of June 17, started the downward course of the Government from its high pedestal of prestige and induced it to put peace feelers.

Soon after his resignation he sought with some effect to enlist the support of public opinion in Britain for the Bardoli

people, through Mr. Saklatwala M.P., Mr. Pollock, Mr. Mardy Jones, some time editor of the *Indian Daily News.* He even wrote to the Secretary of State for India, the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Birkenhead, in order to enlighten him on a situation "which will soon develop into an all-India affair and which may have very serious consequences." (Munshiji's last letter was printed and circulated among the members of Parliament).

The final letter to the Governor and the resignation evoked appreciation from all quarters.

Munshiji's correspondence had the desired effect of bringing the Government down from atop the high horse which it was till then riding.

Munshiji's efforts to secure a just settlement of the Bardoli question continued. An apparent setback to the prospects of settlement came when the Governor offered terms at Surat which were rejected by the Sardar. The gulf between the two was wide.

There was much in these circumstances to discourage if not to dissuade any peacemaker. But Munshiji is nothing if not unsparing in his efforts. Some members of his party were angry at a constitutionalist resorting to the unholy camp of the Bardoli agitators. The Education Minister who had always been Munshiji's friend and collaborator in the Legislature and outside, had earlier warned him against putting himself too much under the influence of Shri Vithalbhai Patel. He wrote him that it is "playing with fire", for "the ways of Vithalbhai are inscrutable like those of Providence." Once in conversation the Minister asked Munshiji "Does Vallabhbhai rule over Gujarat that Munshi should have given resignation at the bidding of Vallabhbhai?" The Education Minister's long-standing friendship with Munshiji ultimately broke on the rock of Bardoli.

In Bardoli itself, rumour went that the Earl of Birkenhead, Secretary of State, was so much upset with the way things were developing and particularly by Munshiji's correspondence with the Governor that he had even decided on military occupation of the whole district. But in spite of this

gloomy outlook everywhere, Munshiji was not the man to lose courage.

In his opening speech in the Council, the Governor imposed an additional condition for settlement, viz., that the members for Surat on behalf of their constituents must accept or refuse the conditions, viz. (1) to pay up the revenue now due to Government and (2) to stop the present agitation. An imperilaist ultimatum it was.

In consultation with Sir Chunilal Mehta, the then Finance Member and Sheth Lalji Naranji and R. B. Bhimbhai Naik, Munshiji went to ascertain the attitude of Gandhiji and Sardar Vallabhbhai towards a settlement after the Governor's speech. Gandhiji then gave him the minimum which he on behalf of the Satyagrahis was prepared to accept.

A. Pending the inquiry, old assessment to be accepted.

B. Satyagrahis will call off the campaign simultaneously the pronouncement is made about the inquiry.

C. An open judicial inquiry within the terms of the Land Revenue Code by a judicial officer alone or assisted by a revenue officer with terms of reference as given below and under which the people will have a lead and test evidence with the help of counsel if necessary.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Firstly—To inquire into and report upon the complaint of the people of Bardoli and Valod:

(*a*) That the enhancement of Revenue recently made is not warranted in terms of the Revenue Code;

(*b*) that the reports and notifications accessible to the public do not contain sufficient data warranting the enhancement and that some of the data given are wrong;

(*c*) and to find if the people's complaint is held to be justified, what enhancement or reduction, if any, there should be upon the old assessment.

And *Secondly*—to report upon the allegations made by or on behalf of the people about the coercive measures adopted by the Government in order to collect the enhanced revenue.

D. ALL lands to be restored.

E. Prisoners to be released.

F. All Talatis and Patels to be reinstated.
G. Valod liquor shop-keeper to be compensated.

During the discussions with Munshiji, Gandhiji went to the extent of offering to give up the demand for an inquiry into the coercive measures if that alone stood in the way of the settlement.

With these terms, Munshiji saw Sardar Vallabhbhai on the 27th July, and after consultation with him, asked for an interview with the Governor. The terms when conveyed to the Governor were rejected by him, with the result that Munshiji lost caste both with the Government House and with his own party men, some of whom termed him a traitor and a mere mouthpiece of Gandhiji. The *Times of India* called him the ADC of Vallabhbhai Patel. But he persisted in his course. And the persistence was worthwhile. For, in spite of the apparent *impasse* that was now before him, with both parties rejecting any approach to each other, he declined to accept defeat.

As a result of his interview with the Governor, Munshiji found that the main difficulties to a settlement were:

(*a*) unconditional undertaking required of the Surat members;

(*b*) restoration of sold lands;

(*c*) reinstatement of *all* Talatis and Patels; and

(*d*) compensation.

The result of the interview and his own reactions to it are best seen in a private and confidential letter which Munshiji wrote to Sardar Vallabhbhai on 29th July which read in part:

"Beach House",
Napean Sea Road,
Bombay, 29th July, 1928.

My Dear Vallabhbhai,

On my return I had strenuous times. R. M. Bhatt saw me on the station. He has received a letter from H. E. saying his deposit should come from the Surat Members.

About the interview I am posting with this a summary. First, the attitude was: "I have demanded an acceptance of my ultimatum from Surat members. I will take that and nothing else". After I stated that if I was felt as an intruder, there was no need to take up his time, things cooled down.

His attitude was: no more negotiations at all, particularly with you or with any one on your behalf. Surat members alone must give the undertaking, without any conditions, as they alone will be recognised. Submission must be made, and then the concession would be granted. So there was no basis for any *settlement* between the two parties.

Then we went through the terms. There is very little difference as you will see: (*a*) No compensation and (*b*) all talatis, patels will not be reinstated, but individual cases only will be considered. But again and again the *sine qua non* was unconditional acceptance of the ultimatum first within the time given. After an hour and a quarter we parted.

My impressions are that for a compromise at this stage:

(1) Everything should be given by way of grace but Satyagrahis should be made to appear that they have submitted;

(2) the ultimatum has to be accepted by the Surat Members unconditionally, and compliance has to be made before anything could be done;

(3) Satyagrahis have not to be recognised or dealt with directly;

(4) Surat members, the constitutional spokesmen of Bardoli, to undertake the payment of the revised assessment, getting the difference from Bhatt or any one. These appear to be the conditions imposed by the S. of S.

Then I felt the discussion in such a manner as could be resumed if necessary and promised to see Rieu as to the form of the letter which H. E. wanted; but I confess I felt exasperated at this attitude.

When I went to our friends they had their opportunity. The general feeling was that I had made mistake in seeing you and G., and H. E.; that .... and .... could get any day better terms from Rieu; that compromise should be tried through Rieu or Chunilal; that there was nothing wrong in Surat Members giving Bhatt's

money through their agency; that the awful fate kept in store by Government should be averted at any cost.

I told them what I thought. I felt that submission to the ultimatum in the form demanded was humiliating; that you having rejected better terms at Surat, to accept the terms now at the point of bayonet and without recognising your existence, was a blow intended at the prestige of public life in India.

All that now needs be done by me was to incorporate the minimum that Gandhiji gave me and what Government was going to give in so far as it was consistent, in a dignified letter and send it to Government, promising that if this request was granted they will see that Satyagraha was called off. I have reduced this to writing and sent a copy to .... and ..... Nobody likes this idea. ....and ....want to carry on negotiations in their own way. .... is wisely cautious and watching. Surat members and Nariman may come and see you.

I am unfortunately in complete diagreement with these gentlemen. I find that my notions of prestige of public life and the dignity of your movement are not shared by many of our friends. They feel that my attitude hampers and is likely to hamper the settlement; that my interference is more likely to prevent even you from being reasonable; and that any of them seeing you coming to Poona with Mr. Lalji to ratify what he does, will be conducive to a happier end. I may be wrong but somehow I cannot reconcile the courage and the nobility with which you have conducted the movement and our utterances and resignations with the efforts which some of us are now making to accommodate ourselves to the ultimatum delivered. I may however assure you that if no compromise is made, the consequences to you and to Gujarat will be terrible, as the movement *is likely* to be dealt with as a rebellion.

Unless you require me in further negotiations, I would rather not worry our friends at Poona, who as they say, have the interests of the peasants more at heart than everybody and who are engaging themselves in finding out a solution. On Wednesday morning I am going back and I hope they would have found a way. I am sending them (*a*) a copy of my impressions of H. E.'s interview (*b*) Minimum terms reduced to writing in the form of a letter to be addressed by Surat members. I am also sending

Gandhiji this letter and the impressions and the minimum terms.

Yours sincerely,
K. M. MUNSHI

In his letter to Gandhiji in Gujarati, Munshiji had written "Like Hira, I went to Ghogha and came back" using a Gujarati idiom meaning I had been on a fool's errand. Promptly came the reply "Hira (diamond) has come back, but not lost its lustre."

On the 29th and 30th July some of the Gujarat members wrote to and secured from Dewan Bahadur Harilal a letter setting out certain terms on which Government would be prepared to settle. Shri Haribhai Amin, a member of the Legislature, was sent with those terms, to Vallabhbhai. Those terms in Munshiji's opinion did not substantially differ from the terms offered by His Excellency at Surat and had superadded to them a condition as to an undertaking by the Surat members. Shri Nariman who accompanied Shri Amin described these terms "impossible to accept consistently with national honour and self-respect."

Shri Nariman and Shri Amin returned with Swami Anand, the personal assistant of Sardar Vallabhbhai. He brought the same minimum terms from Gandhiji which Munshiji had received from him the week before. Shri Lalji Naranji, armed with these terms, put himself in communication with Sir Chunilal. Next day the Sardar was sent for. He arrived in Poona on Friday, the 3rd August, and after a very long discussion an undertaking which would satisfy the requirements of His Excellency and would not stultify the Surat Members was agreed upon. The Sardar was prepared to give up clause (G) of Gandhiji's minimum, viz., compensation to the Valod Shopkeeper and to drop the inquiry into the coercive measures. Negotiations were conducted far into the night, Munshiji being a party to it, on the testimony of Shri Mahadeo Desai. Next day, Sir Chunilal induced Government to accept the undertaking in the form agreed upon, to grant an inquiry in the terms of Gandhiji's minimum, to reinstate *all* Talatis and Patels.

The stumbling block was the restoration of sold lands. It was likely that this stumbling block may prove fatal to a settlement.

Then a process was fixed whereby Government may not have to cancel the sales and yet the effect would be the restoration of such land to the original holders. The process was that the land should be acquired from the purchasers at the purchasers' cost price: Rs. 10,787. The price, however, represented roughly two years' revised assessment for 1927-28 and 1928-29.

The original holders whose lands were forfeited and sold had already saved that year's assessment 5,000 odd rupees. So the only excess which they had to pay for acquiring the land was the balance of about Rs. 6000. Out of the sale proceeds which Government had recovered from Mr. Garda and others, Government after deducting the assessment for 1927-28, was to transfer the balance of about Rs. 6,000 to the credit of holders of the land towards the payment of next year's assessment. The result was that Government was not to cancel the sales, the original Khatedar in effect had not to pay any money and the land was to come back to them.

To carry out this process Munshiji left for Surat and with the assistance of the Collector got the lands reconveyed to the original agriculturists.

Thus was laid the foundations of that confidence and mutual loyalty between Sardar Vallabhbhai and Munshiji which for eighteen years have remained undimmed. It was at this time that Munshiji used for the Gandhian school shaped by the Sardar the words *Mahayana* Gandhism as contrasted with that of the Gandhian purists, which he called *Hinayana* Gandhism. And in spite of years of effort to be *Hinayanist* Munshiji, by temperament and principle, has remained a *Mahayanist.**

The late Shri Mahadeo Desai referring to Munshiji's part in the settlement of the Bardoli question wrote in his *Story of Bardoli.*

***Northern Buddhism which had absorbed many features of Shaiva cult is called *Mahayana* (big cart) Buddhism as contrasted with the purer southern variety styled *Hinayana* (small cart).**

Among the public men who evinced an interest in the Bardoli question and tried to help the peasants' cause, Sjt. K. M. Munshi's name deserves prominent mention. Referring to his visit to Bardoli he wrote:

> It would have been more fortunate if they (the interceders) all had visited Bardoli and acted on the evidence of their own eyes and ears and understanding. One of them, however, did so his lasting credit and put the results of his own inquiries before the public in a manner which at once arrested public attention and made Bardoli the cynosure of all eyes in a greater degree than ever before. We refer, of course, to Sjt. K. M. Munshi.

On his historic letter of resignation after his visit to Bardoli to Sir Leslie Wilson, Sjt. Mahadev Desai commented:

> The letter which naturally attracted wide public attention and which was reproduced in by the press throughout India is thus a document of first rate importance in the history of the struggle . . . The letter sent a thrill through the hearts of all who had any fellow feeling for their compatriots and placed the Bardoli question in the forefront of all questions engaging public attention.

Munshiji's part in the final settlement has been aptly described by Shri Mahadev in the chapter 'Triumph of Satyagraha' in the *Story of Bardoli*.

VI

BREAKER OF LAWS

From the triumph of Bardoli in 1928 to the trials that began with the Round Table Conference in 1930 it was a period for observation and reflection for Munshiji. In Britain and her statesmen including Lord Irwin the Pious, he saw insincerity and hypocrisy. In spite of frequent and fulsome utterances regarding British policy in India they certainly did not wish to transfer power. The appointment of the all-White Simon Commission which evoked the protest of 'the whole of India except its job hunting classes' was fresh proof of it.

In the country he saw the soulless machinery of Government, with the 'the steel frame' bureaucracy as the real rulers

of the land. The conviction grew in him that India would not progress either in freedom or prosperity so long as its fate was vested in the hands of this corporation which saw red in the smallest of national aspirations. But yet the country was helpless at its feet! The system of Government was stifling.

Nor was he inwardly satisfied with his own self. The feeling of discontent was growing within him. The pitiful routine of piling up gold mohurs as a professional lawyer was disgusting and yet necessary in the life he had come to live and which he had not the courage to leave.

And the unreality of communal quarrels for and against safeguards, political feuds on the respective merits of complete Independence and Dominion Status, ultimatums, protests, and negotiations, all-party conferences and reports, all contributed to a political atmosphere which to him appeared unreal.

But the stream of events was moving too fast for any stagnant pool to survive. In February 1930, the Congress Working Committee had authorised Gandhiji to start the Civil Disobedience campaign and he, in turn, had decided upon Salt Satyagraha. On March 13, he set out on his historic march to Dandi, and set before the country and the world a spectacle that thrilled millions of souls without threatening a single one. A Nation was being born.

The birthpangs were felt by every politically conscious Indian, high and humble. Even to those like Munshiji, 'tied to the millstone of luxurious living', these events brought a torture of soul. When even the humble peasant was up and doing in the service of his country, would he lean back and mind his own business?

> "Why was I not in my country's service?" he asked himself later (*I Follow the Mahatma* p. 81) "Why was I not ready to stand for the ideals which I always cherished? Why had I not the courage even of an ordinary Gujarati villager? When Gujarat was rising like one man, why was I, who always talked of its greatness staying away from the fight? When the nation had declared a war, why was I thinknig of sneaking away to Kashmir?"

The conflict between conscience and the love of comfort, between dull routine and the larger duty, between the constitutionalist and the crusader, could not last long. On April 14, 1930 he wrote to Gandhiji a letter which was published all over India.

Dear Mahatmaji,

For some days past I have carefully watched the heroic struggle which Gujarat has commenced under your guidance and I feel that I cannot let career or comforts stand between me and the step which I am now taking.

I believed and still believe that Dominion Status is not far removed from Independence; but after anxious thought I am convinced that the Government is determined not to transfer any substantial power to Indians; that the present Constitution is a mask to conceal the irresponsible despotism of a well-organised official group; that no political progress or economic salvation is possible unless by the magnitude of our sacrifice we compel, to borrow your inimitable phrase, "a complete change of heart" in those who have constituted themselves the relentless enemies or our aspirations.

In 1920, I left the Congress because at Nagpur you changed its creed; today, in 1930, I rejoin it because I have come to believe that outside that creed there is no honest political life. For long I disapproved of your methods; today, except through them, I cannot visualise a free India.

I have joined the Congress and submitted the resignation of my membership of the Bombay Legislative Council. It was with a deep mortification that I assisted at the farce enacted in the Bombay Council, where under the garb of democracy, the most irresponsible despotism was legalised.

I am now offering my services, feeble as they are, to you. Perhaps delicate health may make it difficult for me to bear the strenuous life of hardship and comparative poverty which I will have to face; but when the whole of Gujarat and with it India has started on a glorious march in martyrdom, I, who dreamt of greatness through my literary efforts cannot stand by and look on.

Personal affairs and a part-heard case will keep me occupied till the 17th; on the 18th I will go to see my old mother at Panchgani; on the 21st I will place myself at your command.

I met Mahadevbhai yesterday, and he said you could be seen at Dandi on Wednesday. If you let me know by wire, I will come there as I expect that the Judge before whom I am appearing will not sit in Court on Wednesday.

On the same day he wrote to the Bombay Government resigning his seat on the Legislative Council as the University representative.

Dear Sir Frederick,

For a considerable time I have watched with bitter anguish of spirit how the Legislatures as constituted under the Government of India Act are being used as agencies for legalising the despotism of the official group and for dividing the politicians of the land. If I continued as a member of the Bombay Council so far, it was only because it was difficult to give up a position from which I could look after the interests of the University I love so much.

It is no longer possible to hug the fond delusion to the heart that in the matter of granting Dominion Status the British Government means well by our people. It has started a ruthless war against Indian aspirations in the name of law and order; and those who witnessed or read of the unprovoked violence of the Police the other day near the Girgaon Magistrate Court can have no doubt that in the Prosecution of this war the authorities have set themselves no limits either imposed by civilisation or of fair-play.

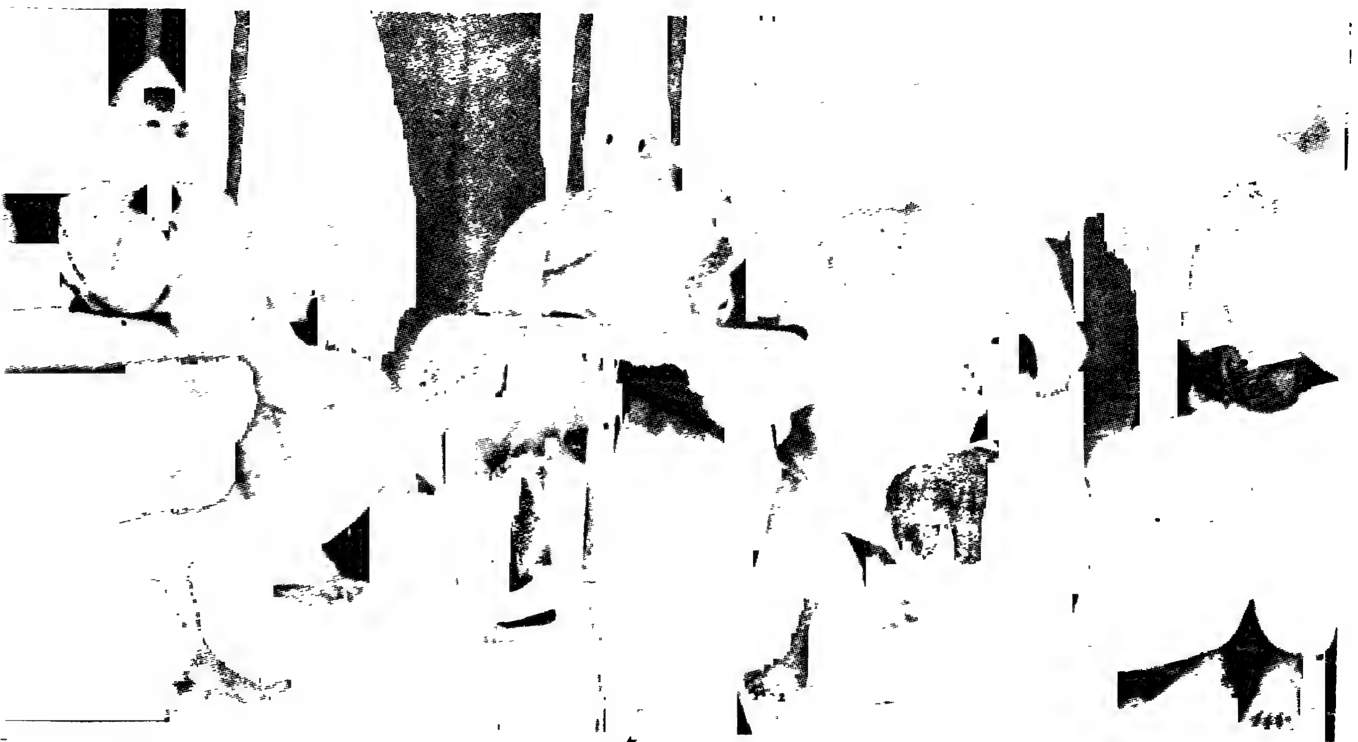
Under the circumstances there is only one path to which duty points and that is to join the Congress which alone stands today for the dignity and freedom of our unfortunate nation. As the Congress mandate requires that I should resign my seat in the Council I am forwarding a formal resignation to the Secretary of the Council.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,
K. M. MUNSHI.

The *Bombay Chronicle* on 16th April, 1930 commented on Munshiji's resignation:

"Mr. K. M. Munshi, who is among the latest to resign his seat in the Legislative Council but the delay has only completed his disillusionment about the utility of Councils in winning Swaraj . . . Mr. Munshi is not content



Balwantrai Thakore, Munshiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai, Mahadeo Desai after the Dandi March was over (1930)

> with merely resigning from the Council but has determined to throw himself wholeheartedly into Gandhiji's campaign. He is now a complete convert to the Congress cause. We warmly congratulate Mr. Munshi and also Mrs. Munshi on their decision to place themselves at Gandhiji's command.

For 10 years since the Nagpur Congress, Munshiji had remained away from the Congress. He had now returned to its fold. "Both of you have come back from your *vanavasa* (life in the forest)" greeted Mahatmaji when Munshiji and Abbas Tyabji met him near Navsari on March 21. Anybody else would have deemed the *vanavasa* such as Munshiji had a life of success. For had he not amassed some wealth and secured for himself the means to a comfortable life and social position instead of wandering in the wilderness with impractical visionaries? Even politically, had he not achieved a good deal without being a believer in the ineffective political creeds and methods of a visionary?

That day Munshiji himself thought otherwise. The sceptic had now come to believe that "outside the Gandhian creed there was no honest political life." Except through it, he could not visualise a free India. The Congress alone stood for the dignity and freedom of the unfortunate nation. He was completely disillusioned on the utility of Councils in winning Swaraj. Munshiji and his wife now placed themselves at Gandhiji's command.

Hear the new Munshi at his battle post on the sands of Chowpathy issuing directions to the citizens of Bombay on 'How to Outvie Gujarat' in the new scheme of things:

> "We must prove now that Bombay is the first city in India in this great struggle, as it is on the shield of the Municipal Corporation of Bombay. But before we can achieve that proud distinction there is one thing which I feel I must in all humility communicate to all my co-workers and well-wishers of the cause. I have perceived that in the City of Bombay the greatest enemy of our movement is not the Government but the agent provocateur. He mixes with the workers and the volunteers and he is anxious to create disturbances.
>
> The prime need, therefore, is to be strictly non-violent. The volunteers are performing their duty with heroic

discipline. All satyagrahis and sympathisers desire nothing more than complete non-violence. But that is not enough. We must fully realise that in complete non-violence alone lies our victory. Any disturbance will strengthen the hands of Government and drive Mahatmaji to the dire necessity of starving himself to death, as he has threatened. He has given the word and the soldiers under his banner have to die rather than commit or permit violence. We are out to eradicate war by violence and we are determined to succeed.

I would, therefore, very humbly make the following suggestions to the citizens of Bombay participating in this national struggle:—

(1) If a man abuses you, do not retort.

(2) If a man threatens to beat you, hold your hands and bear the punishment.

(3) If the Police strike you do not run away. Remember that you are out to die for your country. Immediately sit down with hands folded.

(4) If the Police rush on you, let all volunteers and Satyagrahis lie down.

I heard of the attack on peaceful citizens near the Girgaum Police Magistracy. Such attacks are intended to test our strength, our heroism and our capacity for being martyrs. When an attack comes, sit down or lie down with folded hands. Let the representatives of force and exploitation walk over your bodies. We wish them joy.

This is an extreme measure which I am suggesting. But Bombay is not Gujarat. Bombay has a certain element of unreliable people. We have to conquer it by the strength of our soul.

We are out to offer ourselves at the altar of our country's freedom and nothing can be more glorious than being trodden to death, under the hoof of arrogant authority in order to vindicate our beloved Mahatmaji's gospel of complete Non-violence.

(*Bombay Chronicle*, 17-4-1930).

The City of Bombay was in the vanguard of the national army. The citizens, men and women, went in processions to Chowpatty, carrying brass vessels and national flags and singing national songs. The defiance of the salt laws was in full swing. And yet the whole movement retained its peaceful character. At a Chowpatty meeting Munshiji elicited wide cheers

from the lakh strong gathering when he exhorted the women specially to organise and prepare salt from the sea water in every chawl in the City, and even to refuse to cook with Government salt.

The Government did not wait long. As the 'ring leader' of a demonstration for manufacturing illicit salt arranged by the War Council of the Provincial Congress Committee Munshiji was arrested. The *Bombay Chronicle* described the trial thus:

> "When his (Munshiji's) case was taken up before the Presidency Magistrate, Mr. Dastur, and he was asked to cross-examine prosecution witnesses, Mr. Munshi said, "As I don't recognise this tribunal appointed by foreign government I will not be able to take any part in these proceedings."
>
> "The Court hall and compound of the Esplanade Police Court was crowded. Mr. Munshi's entry from the lock-up was greeted with enthusiastic shouts from the crowd outside as well as inside the hall."
>
> "Asked whether he would make any plea, Mr. Munshi said 'In doing what I have done, I have only discharged the duties of the high profession to which both of us have the honour to belong . . . I am here to invite you to inflict upon me any penalty which you, in the discharge of your duty as a servant of a foreign employer, choose." He however refused to sign that statement.
>
> The Magistrate in finding the accused guilty, termed the offence under sec. 117, I.P.C. serious. The accused, by committing that offence, had engendered a spirit of lawlessness, in the minds of the public which was bound to be detrimental to the public peace. Mr. Munshi was sentenced to 6 months' S. I. and a fine of Rs. 300 in default, 2 months' further imprisonment. He was put in A class.

Tucked away, though of his own volition, from the hurly-burly of professional and public life in the City, Munshiji, now lodged in the Arthur Road jail, must have felt the change acutely. But jail life routine became a pleasant thing soon in the company of fellow satyagrahis, and the not so distant sound of Gandhiji's sandals and the bleating of his goat. Even indifference or occasional deliberate efforts on the part of the jail authorities could not make these soldiers of freedom unhappy.

In Yeravada—where he was transferred from Bombay, he was once called in when the Sapru-Jayakar combine came to discuss with Gandhiji the Viceroy's offer to the Congress to join the first Round Table Conference. Munshiji himself, now reputed as a successful negotiator, could not find in them the sympathetic understanding which he considered an essential for success.

From Nasik jail, where he was soon transferred, he was released on October 2, 1930, and at Victoria Terminus, Bombay, the City, which had grown in enthusiasm in the meanwhile, sent a huge crowd to welcome him. Back again in the midst of the movement, Munshiji was not quite happy with the group of leaders who had the whole movement in the City in their grip, but who did not appear to him to be wholehearted believers in the Gandhian programme or philosophy. It was perhaps natural that they too wished, like Munshiji himself, that he be sent back to jail.

He was not arrested, however. On the contrary he found himself one of those in charge of the whole movement in Bombay.

For some time he was appointed a member of the Working Committee by Pandit Motilal Nehru, and in that capacity he went to several places to keep up the momentum of the Satyagraha campaign, which was, however, in full swing in the City of Bombay.

Came the Gandhi-Irwin truce, when for the first time in Indian history a representative of the people, "The semi-naked fakir" to use Churchill's disparaging words entered into a treaty with the representative of the mightiest empire on earth.

When Munshiji joined Satyagraha he had almost made up his mind to give up law for full-time politics. But after he came out of jail, and saw the whirlpool of politics about him and the loss of personal life which Gandhian politics involved, he revised his decision, and, when Gandhi-Irwin truce came, he joined the bar.

At the Karachi Congress presided over by Sardar Vallabhbhai, the first plenary session Munshiji was attending after Nag-

pur in 1919, he saw the Gandhian sway supreme in the Congress. Unchallenged in his authority, Gandhiji wielded a dictator's prestige without the dictator's weapons. To Munshiji he seemed to combine, unlike revolutionary leaders of old, revolution and reconstruction: a phenomenal 'synthesis of Rousseau, Robespierre and Napoleon'. He could see the strange spectacle of opponents turning upholders of Gandhiji; of those who came to fight him but remained to cheer. Jawaharlal, who disliked the Gandhi-Irwin truce, moved the resolution confirming the pact. Subhas, out to revolt, did not go beyond reading a leftist manifesto. Munshiji served on a sub-committee appointed to examine the amendment to the Fundamental Rights Resolution of Pandit Jawaharlal. It put the resolution into the final form in which it was approved by Gandhiji and accepted by the Congress.

At a time when Munshiji was slowly and steadily merging himself in the Gandhist current, and when to all outward appearances his allegiance was not marked out, it is noteworthy that the Communists too attempted to woo him to their side. The Reds were already challenging the Gandhian influence and were only too confident that their day was dawning on the Indian horizon. Shri M. N. Roy, straight from Moscow, was active on the scene. Bombay was not slow to react to the Communist gospel. Shri Dange was one of their ablest leaders in the City at the time. Their programme, according to a manifesto produced in the Meerut Conspiracy Case in which Shri Dange was one of the accused, was frankly the organisation of mass violence through agrarian strikes, food riots, plunder, and peasant revolts. Their part even in communal riots was already known to Munshiji from what he had come to know of at the time of the Percival Committee of Inquiry into the Bombay Riots of February 1928.

To Munshiji who had by now observed the Gandhian method of Non-violence in action at close quarters and absorbed its message to India and humanity, this gospel of violence could make no appeal. Munshiji was a convert, nay a captive of the philosophy of Satyagraha and none of the manifesta-

tions of Red practice or precept could win his political allegiance.

But Gandhiji was soon to be not merely his political leader, but his personal mentor and master. In 1931, an incident brought him closer to the Mahatma. The Civil Disobedience movement conducted so often on the lower plane of leaders unable to rise to the heights of a Mahatma had left its residue of personal feuds and jealousies. And Munshiji as well as his wife were the victims of a whispering campaign of personal calumny. It was assiduously spread that the Munshis were but agents of the foreign bureaucracy! The rumours were so mortifying that Munshiji during a lonely morning walk with Gandhiji on the Hornby Vellard in Bombay, offered to disappear from the scene of these calumnies, back to the profession. But the Master was all-understanding. On his advice, Munshiji remained in the field he had chosen, realising that in the field of politics service was not free from the disgrace of personal feuds which had to be put up with. And when they parted that morning Munshiji had almost realised the prayer:

> "Make me a captive Lord,
> And then I shall be free,
> Force me to render up my sword.
> And I shall conqueror be."

The Second Round Table Conference ended without India coming nearer to Unity or Freedom, and before Gandhiji on his return, set foot on Indian soil, the issue between Congress and Lord Willingdon's government had come to a head. National leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal, Khan Brothers, were already arrested. On December 28, 1931, Gandhiji returned to Bombay, with no malice towards those who disappointed him but with a sincere intention to work the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which was all but broken to bits by the Government. The rejection of his request for an interview with Lord Willingdon made matters worse and everybody knew that all the Congress leaders including Gandhiji would soon be caged. Munshiji bade good-bye to children and the aged mother who had only a day before told Gandhiji: "I have entrusted my son to you". On January 4,

1932 Gandhiji was arrested. Munshiji and the other Bombay leaders, about a hundred of them, followed on January 5. The second Civil Disobedience Campaign was on.

After a few weeks in a Bombay jail Munshiji along with a few others were stolen out of Bombay as too dangerous even for a trial. But later at Bijapur he was let on parole, only to be hauled up again for non-observance of parole. At the trial Munshiji pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 2 years' R. I. and a fine.

In Bijapur jail there were some 200 political prisoners and nearly hundred others. The politicals themselves were of quite diverse categories in temper and behaviour, the more unmanageable among them often necessitating Munshiji's mediation between them and the Jail Superintendent. In fact for several months the jail was more his than the Superintendent's. The prison life afforded him new experiences out of the enforced contact with political prisoners and criminals alike. If a Communist amused him by his naive faith in the Kingdom of Marx to come, now that Gandhi was fading away, the criminals and other habituals often found a worthy confidant in the future Home Minister of Bombay.

Jail life also provided opportunities for studies, discussions, drill, prayers, just as in a Congress camp. It also gave him plenty of leisure for literary activities. Besides several Gujarati books, an English work which is now well-known for its scholarship, *Gujarata and Its Literature*, was written in jail.

In a mood of vindictiveness the Government of Bombay had reduced Munshiji from class A to class B. The diet allowed in the latter unfortunately did not suit his delicate health, and failing health involving loss of weight and occasional fever and neuritis were thenceforward his constant friends. In 1932-33 he was twice released on parole on account of the serious illness once of his mother and another time of his son. On return to jail, however, further deterioration of health was fortunately prevented by the then Home Member's permission, after he had heard of Munshiji's neuritic right hand, to have whatever food he required at his own expenses. The monotony of jail life had its deleterious effect on the prisoners, but in

Munshiji's case what was wanting in variety was made up by occasional humour, astrological studies and the absorbing interest he always took in his multifold literary work.

On December 8, 1933, on the eve of his release, he notes in his diary:

"Tell him (Gandhiji): I am not offering C. D. again: I want to go back to the Bar. Reasons:

(*a*) health will not permit;

(*b*) our love and the welfare of the family make it necessary.

Consult him as to—

(*a*) Whether C. D. should be withdrawn;

(*b*) Whether before the new Act is passed, he expects things to look up;

(*c*) Whether an all-parties stand would be advisable:

(*d*) What activity I should adopt to be helpful to him;

(*e*) Whether a propaganda centre would be of any use to him; and if so where;

(*f*) Whether I should express my views on the proposed Act, Communism and class war.

On December 16, he was released from Bijapur jail.

VII

THE SWARAJ PARTY

The political stalemate that ensued as a result of the gradual fizzling out of the Second Civil Disobedience campaign was both depressing and demoralising to political workers all over the country. Congressmen had practically no programme whatever before them except the Poona (Constructive) programme, which could not enthuse much less engage many beyond the uncompromising Gandhians.

The Central Legislative was then about to be dissolved. and there was practically no concrete plan of action for Congressmen outside jail. Were they to sit back and see reactionaries returned to power by the apathy of the electorate? The country was solidly behind the Congress, but there was no method of showing it to the authorities who were under the delusion that indiscriminate jailing of patriots was enough to

brush the whole country. To Munshiji and some of his colleagues, the stalemate was no stalemate. They struck upon the idea of reviving the Swaraj Party which was started by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, had died an early death with the advent of Satyagraha. Today the situation was different. Indeed it called for some sort of parliamentary activity to demonstrate before the world and the people the democratic will of the Indian Nation.

But given the unchallenged hold over the masses which Gandhiji possessed, there was no question of any movement succeeding without his blessing. If the Swaraj Party were to be revived, it had to be with the Mahatma's consent. Who would secure it, knowing the strong views he always held on Council entry? Who would bell the cat?

Immediately on his release, on December 20, 1933, the Munshis, husband and wife saw Gandhiji who was at that time in Madras in connection with the Harijan Movement. It was at this time that he made a fateful decision. Gandhiji asked him not to join the profession again but to undertake full-time political work. But uncertain health, and the needs of a rich temperament of many facets made him decline the invitation. "We are birds of the spring. We will sing while it lasts. And then will disappear to be heard no more." Munshiji has systematically set his face against whole time political work which demanded the sacrifice of personal life and literary pursuits.

While at Bombay he discussed with Shri A. Rangaswamy Iyengar the question of the revival of the Swaraj Party.

A believer as he had always been in the benefits of parliamentary activity, he co-operated with Shri Iyengar and placed their joint draft scheme before Gandhiji. The Mahatma approved. They then contacted Dr. Ansari, Shri Bidhan Roy and other leaders, and though Shri Rangaswamy Iyengar's sudden death removed the moving spirit of the new plan, the other leaders along with Munshiji persisted in the course. Few outside knew at that time that Gandhiji's approval of the parliamentary plan had already been obtained by Munshiji.

Those were days when council work was looked down upon as something unfitting for the sea-green Congressmen, and no wonder Munshiji was sometimes contemptuously referred to as "the man who wanted to go to the Council".

A conference was called at Delhi of those Congress leaders who were in sympathy with the move. After two days' deliberation on the basis of Shri Iyengar's draft approved by Gandhiji they issued a statement announcing their decision to revive the All India Swaraj Party to enable Congressmen who were not offering Civil Resistance to undertake through an organisation the constructive programme as contemplated in the Poona statement, and to take up the Government challenge in relation to the forthcoming election on the two issues of repealing all repressive laws and rejection of the White Paper and its replacement by the National Demand.

The new Swaraj Party was thus different from the old one. This time it was, not in opposition to Gandhiji, but with his blessings. It was therefore decided to place the conclusions of the Conference before the Mahatma, and a provisional Committee was formed with Dr. Ansari and Munshiji, on it to draw up the constitution and programme of work.

Munshiji, as one of the active brains behind the new party, followed up the Conference with the task of getting in touch with leading Congressmen all over India who were favourable to the idea. He and others who were confident of the blessings of the Mahatma in this new move proved themselves right when Gandhiji, soon after an interview with him at Patna by Dr. B. C. Roy, Shri Bhulabhai Desai and Dr. Ansari, wrote to Dr. Ansari welcoming the revival of the Swaraj Party in spite of his views on the utility of Council entry remaining what they were in 1920.

Gandhiji not only blessed it but exhorted those Congressmen who had faith in entry into legislatures to do so in the interest of the country, and further placed himself at the disposal of the party.

The party's objects and prospects were thus analysed by Munshiji in the course of a press statement on April 6, 1934, said:

"I am filled with inexpressible joy to learn that Mahatmaji has approved of the step which we took at Delhi. Those of us who met at Delhi except for a negligible voice or two felt confident that he in his deep wisdom will welcome the honest attempt we were making to arrest the growing disintegration of our political life.

"The power and strength of the Congress exists today in the Country, notwithstanding the absence of any positive manifestations; and the All India Swaraj Party will furnish the channel through which they will find their true expression under existing conditions.

"There is no comparison between the formation of the Swaraj Party in 1924 and its revival now. Then it was in opposition to Mahatmaji; now, it lives and will flourish under his guidance. The Party then entered the Legislatures to obstruct the Montford Constitution. It will now go to the polling booths to render it impossible for the British Government to foist on Indians any constitution which will keep them second class citizens of a White Empire.

"I daresay that on such an important subject there will be difference of opinion among Congressmen themselves, but our sense of discipline must triumph once again and the nation must respond to the new policy of which Mahatmaji has so unequivocally approved.

"After Mahatmaji the thanks of the Nation are due to Dr. Ansari, Dr. Roy and my late friend Mr. Rangaswamy Iyengar. My only regret is that he is not alive today to see his efforts crowned with success.

"The important work now before us is to set up the Party organisations all over the country. The time at our disposal is very short and before Dr. Ansari leaves for Europe, Congressmen must see that the Swaraj Party is functioning in all Provinces. This will be the proper challenge to that constitutional monstrosity called the White Paper."

Great must have been the satisfaction that Munshjii and his colleagues felt on the occasion when as a result of hard and sustained work for a long time the parliamentary programme received the commendation of Gandhiji and now marked the beginning of another phase of the Indian Struggle for freedom.

On 8th April, Mahatma Gandhi issued a statement suspending the Civil Resistance campaign and restricting it to

himself, which was described by Munshiji as "an act of highest self-abnegation." "A man so big alone can adjust his creed to the weakness of his followers with so generous a gesture", he added.

That Munshiji's faith in Council entry was only a projection of his own strong faith in Gandhism instead of opposition to it, as in the case of some others, is evident from a confidential letter he wrote to Pandit Santhanam on 9th April.

> "Between you and me it is absolutely necessary that some of us must be actively associated with the Swaraj Party though attempts in the nature of things are bound to be made to rush in all sorts of programme, it will be our duty to stand by Gandhism. So far as Indian conditions are concerned I cannot imagine salvation coming to us through any other source."
>
> The part of the Swaraj Party was no smooth one. There were several, for instance, who held that as the A.I.C.C. had once banned Council entry only that body could revoke the decision. Unless and until it was thus revoked it would be disloyalty to stand or vote in elections.

Shri K. F. Nariman was one of those who opposed the move on this ground and attacked in public what he called 'Mr. Munshi's loose conclusions', and sought to limit the significance of Gandhiji's blessings to the new party.

Another trenchant critic of Munshiji and the Swaraj Party, and incidentally of Gandhiji who supported it, was Shri Purshottam Tricumdas, at present one of the leading Congress Socialists. He even referred to an unholy pact between Gandhiji and the Swarajists!

"I am constrained to come to the conclusion" he said in the course of a statement, "that this sudden emergence of unshaken faith (of Mr. Munshi and his colleagues) in Mr. Gandhi is the result of an unholy pact between those who are anxious to form the Swaraj Party and Mr. Gandhi. It seems that the Swarajists to support Mr. Gandhi's pet scheme, have agreed to commit the nation to an impossible policy in return for his support to their pet programme. We wish them all the joy of their pact."

Shri Purshottam went on to plead for a special session of the Congress to consider and decide upon a policy of day to day application and without the restrictions backed by "Mr. Gandhi and his strange band of supporters."

This controversy between the exponents of a change of tactics and the no-changers, headed in Bombay by Munshiji and Shri Nariman respectively, was carried on in public to such an undue length that a Bombay Paper, the *Sun,* described the controversy about Munshiji's advocacy in favour of change as "futile and unwarranted". It asked, one may add prophetically, "will Bombay be asked to choose between Mr. Nariman and Mr. Munshi?" The paper pointed out that there was neither any threat nor any revolt implied in Munshiji's advocacy nor even any lack of concern about the Congress prestige or discipline.

The principal supporters of the Swaraj Party move were:

Delhi—Dr. M. A. Ansari; Mr. Asaf Ali.

Gujarat—Vaman Mukadam, Godhra; Amritlal Sheth, (Editor: The *Sun.*)

Bombay—Mrs. Sarojini Naidu; Bhulabahi Desai; S. A. Brelvi.

Maharashtra—Shankerrao Deo; B. G. Kher; Ramniklal Mehta.

Karnatak—H. R. Moharray, Editor: *Samyukta Karnataka;* S. V. Kaujalgi, Bijapur; Sidhappa Hosmani.

Madras—B. K. Bhashyam; S. Satyamurti.

Ajmer-Merwara—Gaurishankar Bhargav.

Andhra—G. V. Subba Rao; T. Prakasam.

Punjab—Pandit K. Santanam.

U. P.—Chaudhury Khaliquzuman; Mohanlal Saxena.

Calcutta—Bidhan Roy; K. S. Roy; N. R. Sarkar.

C. P.—M. S. Aney.

At the Ranchi conference held in May that year, as successor to Delhi, just prior to the A.I.C.C. meeting, on the vexed question of the relation to be maintained between the Congress and the Swaraj Party, it was decided to accept Swaraj Party as the Parliamentary Party of the Congress to carry on the

fight from inside the citadel of the bureaucracy. "The Swarajists' Conference which assembled at Ranchi, yesterday", wrote the *Hindu* "was faced with a difficult and delicate task; and by all accounts it has tackled this with tact, goodwill and an earnest desire to secure the unfettered expression of the national will on the issues of first rate importance that confront the country." There can be no doubt that the successful way in which the Swaraj Party survived the opposition of the no-changers was in no small measure due to the skill with which Munshiji and his colleagues so shaped the party as to be able to express the national will carrying with it Gandhiji's support and blessing at every step. Whether on the White Paper or on the Communal Award, its constitution or its relations with the Congress, the Ranchi Conference made decisions which were ratified by the A.I.C.C. and promised resounding success of the party at the polls. Munshiji himself summed up his impressions of the Conference thus in an interview:

"The Conference was a great success. The Conference proved that in spite of all efforts on the part of the Government nationalism as embodied in the Congress stands triumphant. The enthusiasm, which the last resolution on the White Paper and the Constituent Assembly evoked, showed that the spirit of the nation would never permit the Government to foist on the country so retrograde a measure as the White Paper. Shri Bhulabhai Desai's great speech on this resolution had its echo in every heart and can be said truly to have voiced the sentiments of the whole country. The attitude of the Bengal delegates led by Dr. B. C. Roy, even on such a sore point as the communal question, was very helpful. But the success of the Conference was mainly due to the wise and tactful leadership of Dr. Ansari and the far-seeing guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji has once again led India out of the darkness and unto light. It is now for the country to respond to the call of Ranchi Conference."

He gave another interview to the press on May 7.

"That the Swaraj Party could not have started under better auspices was, the view expressed by Munshiji, in an interview today. All shades of opinion gathered at

Ranchi'', he said, "had accepted the new Party as an 'autonomous parliamentary wing' of the Congress and he had not any doubt of the A.I.C.C. giving the new party an appropriate charter."

"The Congress," Munshiji continued, "stands for the highest ambition of the nation and for totality of national activities. In order to fulfil its mission, therefore, it must assume federal dignity with reference to organisations with specialised programme like the Spinners' Association, the Swaraj Party, the Anti-Untouchability Committee and the Swadesh Sangh. The Swaraj Party had wisely adopted all features of the official economic programme of the Congress as laid down at Karachi, which, it could hope to translate into action. The response from provinces was very encouraging and once the sanction of the A.I.C.C. was forthcoming, the Party would immediately come into existence in the provinces. In Dr. Ansari, Dr. B. C. Roy and Shri Bhulabhai Desai the Party had leaders, who would command the confidence of the whole country. He was sure the Party would be as effective and more disciplined than the old Swaraj Party."—(The *Hindu*, May 8, 1934).

The policy and programme of the Swaraj Party in the drafting of which Munshiji as the Secretary of the Parliamentary Board had a principal share are indications of the trend of progressive nationalist thought at that time. Those who blame the Congress for ignoring the economic interests of the masses and concentrating on a nationalism that would benefit only the indigenous Indian capitalists at the expense of the masses would be surprised to see that social and economic justice for the have-nots had a prominent place in the programme of the Swaraj Party as long ago as 1934.

"The Swaraj Party declares that the guiding principle of the Party is self-reliance in all activities which make for the healthy growth of the nation, and resistance to all vested interests which impede the nation's progress towards Purna Swaraj.

And in giving effect to the said principles the Party resolves to adopt the following programme:

(*a*) To secure the repeal of all acts and regulations which have been enacted or promulgated with a view to impede the healthy growth of the nation and speedy attainment of Purna Swaraj.

(*b*) To secure the release of all political prisoners including and those detained without trial or conviction and to secure the restoration of all rights, properties, and privileges lost or forfeited for political reasons.

(*c*) To secure the abandonment of Andamans as a penal settlement. To resist all acts and propasals for legislative enactments which may be calculated to exploit the country.

(*d*) To move resolutions and introduce and support measures and bills which are necessary for the healthy growth of national life and the consequent displacement of the bureaucracy.

(*e*) To secure such administrative economies particularly in the spending departments of the Government like those of defence and of public debt as would substantially reduce the burden of the Government.

(*f*) To follow a definite economic policy which would prevent the drain of the wealth of the country and the exploitation of one class by another and in particular to prevent or oppose any form of Imperial Preference.

(*g*) To organise economic life conformable to the principle of justice to the end that every worker may be assured of decent living.

(*h*) To safeguard the interests of workers, industrial and agricultural and to secure for them by suitable legislation and in other ways a living wage, healthy conditions of work, limited hours of labour, suitable machinery for the settlements of disputes between employers and workers, landlords and tenants, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment. and adequate provision for women during maternity period.

(*i*) To free labour from all serfdom and conditions bordering on serfdom.

(*j*) To secure the rights for peasants and workers to protect their interests.

(*k*) To regulate currency and exchange solely in national interests.

(*l*) To secure relief for agricultural indebtedness.

(*m*) To work for inter-communal unity with a view to bring about a complete understanding between Hindus, Mohammedans, Sikhs, Parsis.

(*n*) To bring about the removal of untouchability and raising of the so-called depressed classes.

(*o*) To work for village organisation.

(*p*) To acquire the economic control of the country the development of commerce and industry.

(*q*) To acquire the control by the Swaraj Party over Local and Municipal affairs by contesting elections to Local and Municipal Boards in the several provinces.

(*r*) To carry out the constructive programme of the Congress.

(*s*) To organise agencies of foreign propaganda for Indian affairs with special reference to the dissemination of accurate information and the securing of the support of foreign countries in the country's struggle for Purna Swaraj.

In November 1934 it became clear that a section of Congressmen who were opposed to the 'neither accept nor reject' attitude of the Congress towards the communal award were leaving the Congress to found the Congress Nationalist Party under the leadership of Pandit Malaviya. Munshiji's indignation was reflected in his speeches and interviews.

Even Malaviyaji whom he always looked up to with deep reverence and affection was not spared by this zealous campaigner for whom national loyalties always had precedence over personal.

His reason for supporting the Congress stand ***vis-a-vis*** Communal Award may sound curious to those who are familiar with his later views against appeasing Muslim claims. But it must be remembered that the issue of disrupting India had not been born and Munshiji was never averse to accommodate the legitimate claims of minorities in the national framework.

He said at that time:

> "Today for reasons which we need not go into, a large section of Musalmans have brought themselves into believing that the salvation of their community lies in carrying the Communal Award, into effect. If you talk of rejecting the Communal Award their susceptibilities will be wounded, communal squabbles will begin, and you create exactly the situation which the enemies of Indian nationalism want to bring about."

But the confusion is clear by his conception of the right majority-minority power relations.

The Congress Parliamentary Board, of which Munshiji was one of the Secretaries, had its plans ready by June 1934 for a vigorous election campaign throughout the country. And out of the four zones into which the country was divided—Madras, Bombay, Bengal and Delhi—Munshiji was allotted the specific charge of Bombay area which consisted of Bombay and Central Provinces. This involved him in tremendous work on propaganda and publicity tours.

He wrote articles, delivered speeches, organised committees. These speeches and articles of his were both learned and effective. In an article on the subject of Constituent Assembly, for instance, at a time when to the general electorate it was quite a new idea, Munshi explained its historical meaning and significance with the aid of examples drawn from all free countries. He probed into the history of constituent assemblies in Ancient Europe, America, in British Commonwealth, post-war Europe; and showed how the Constituent Assembly had come to play an important part in modern political life.

> "The Congress stands for such an Assembly," he concluded. "For, it alone can be the symbol of India's freedom and the source of her people's strength. Through it India hopes to attain the dignity of an enfranchised nation, fashion its will to self-determination, and find its own soul to express it through fundamental laws.
>
> "Whether this consummation can be reached through parliamentary effort remains to be seen. Its success will largely depend upon the verdict of the voters."

Another article of his, published on 4-8-1934 was entitled "The Hoare Menace: An Outline". In it he effectively exposed the history of four years of constitution-mongering "a graceless story of broken pledges and disappointed hopes." He proved that the Hoare Plan (The White Paper) did not provide dominion government, responsible Government, self-government or a national Government, not even a Federation. Quoting Asquith's prophecy about Irish Constitution he decreed its doom: "For this half-hearted compromise there is inevitably reserved the inexorable sentence which, history shows, must fall on every form of political imposture."

On the autocracy of the Governor-General in the White Paper, with biting irony, he wrote in the course of an article: "A Super Cæsar for India".

> "British statesmen in the past were charged with lack of imagination, but not so now. By the White Paper they have created a unique conception of an autocrat; a super-Cæsar ruling arbitrarily amidst the trappings of responsible government. Only the draftsmen have, with laudable modesty, called him Governor-General. And in fighting the White Paper the Congress is fighting one of the greatest autocracies ever proposed to be set up by one people over another."

His vehement criticism of the Federal scheme is perhaps explained by his view, held till then, that India should have unitary government. When Gandhiji agreed to a federation, he bowed to the inevitable, and accepted it.

VIII

ELECTIONS 1934-37

In October 1934 the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee constituted a Bombay Parliamentary Board with Shri Nariman as the Chairman, and Shri Brelvi and Munshiji as members.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, then President of the Congress, on his release in July 1934, found himself confronted with the great responsibility of organising the election campaign for capturing the Central Assembly. With the ban on the Congress just removed, and the Parliamentary programme adopted at Patna by the A.I.C.C., the released President's primary duty was to win the elections. And even on the parliamentary front, the departure of Dr. Ansari, the President of the Central Parliamentary Board for Europe for medical treatment, and the defection of leaders like Malaviyaji and Shri Aney on the issue of the Communal Award had increased his responsibilities.

At this there was an incident which showed Munshiji's loyalty to the cause he was serving. Almost immediately he felt compelled to overrule Shri Nariman's inexplicable inclination

to put up only one Congress candidate, viz. himself, for the two non-Muhammedan seats allotted to Bombay City. After scrutiny of the rolls the Sardar insisted on a suitable candidate being found for the other seat, instead of leaving it free for the Liberal Parsi candidate Sir Cowasji Jehangir. In the hunt for the other candidate Munshiji was the first to be approached, but he declined for personal reasons. The Board then decided and prevailed upon Dr. G. V. Deshmukh to stand as the second candidate, and the selection for Bombay was ratified by the All-India Congress Parliamentary Board. Nominations of both the Congress candidates were accordingly filed in time.

On the 10th October, however, i.e., a day prior to the last date for nomination Shri Nariman told the Sardar, who was leaving Bombay for Wardha, that he was not eligible to stand as the name on the roll was that of his brother and not his own and that some candidate should be made to stand in his stead. Munshiji was then hurriedly fetched to Victoria Terminus and quite against his inclinations was pressed for the honour of the Congress to get his disqualification removed and his nomination paper filed the next day. Against his inclinations and his personal difficulties Munshiji accepted the mandate. The Sardar's instructions were that if Shri Nariman's nomination was accepted, Shri Munshiji should withdraw his, but if Shri Nariman's nomination paper was declared invalid, Munshiji should press his nomination and stand.

That night, however, Mathuradas Tricumji, Munshiji and Bhulabhai discovered that the objection to Shri Nariman's candidature could be got over on the strength of Rule 6 (1) (*a*) of the Electoral Rules. That Rule provided for the nomination of anybody whose name appeared on the electoral roll of a constituency situate in the same province and prescribed for elections to the provincial council by rules under sec. 72-A of the Act, a provision which in similar circumstances the late Vithalbhai Patel took advantage of. And Shri Nariman's name, by virtue of this clause, could be legitimately proposed, it was held, and consequently there was no ground to fear rejection. Shri Nariman was duly informed of it, but Shri

Munshi left for Poona by the night train to get his disqualification removed by the Government of India.

Only a few days before the last day Shri Nariman had discovered another obstacle. He wrote to the Sardar saying that as Shri Misra's (Jubbulpore) disqualification was not removed, all Congress candidates should withdraw in protest and he himself was going to do so. He even gave an interview to the *Chronicle* to that effect. The attempt was, however, stopped by a timely warning by the Sardar that such indiscipline would not be tolerated in any case.

On the 11th October, the last day of nomination, when Shri Chhotalal Mehta, Solicitor, went to the Collector's office to file Mr. Munshi's nomination, Shri Nariman came and insisted on withdrawing his nomintaion.

Next Monday, however, i.e., on 15th, the day for scrutiny of the nomination papers, Shri Nariman presented himself early in the morning before the Collector with a fresh nomination under the new clause. The Collector naturally declined to accept it, as the time for nominations had expired at 3 p.m. on Thursday.

Munshiji's gallant efforts to save the prestige of the organisation would not avail much in such a hopeless situation.

The election day, viz., 14th November 1934, saw more misfortunes for the Congress. Several Congress workers, press reporters and other impartial witnesses later alleged that Shri Nariman went to the polling booths of F and G wards at about 2 p.m. and gave instructions to the workers that voters should be asked to vote solidly for Dr. Deshmukh as Munshiji had already got overwhelming support in all the other wards.

When the results of the counting of votes was announced it was found that Munshiji lost a seat to Sir Cawasji by a little more than 1000 votes. It was clear that but for the 800 to 1000 solid votes given to Dr. Deshmukh (as was later found on inspection by R. G. Tendulkar, Bar-at-Law) according to Shri Nariman's instructions both the Congress candidates would have been elected.

Dr. Deshmukh	19,872 votes
Sir Cawasji	18,140 votes
Sjt. Munshi	17,015 votes

These tactics were the topic of public discussion for quite a long time. The *Bombay Sentinel* published a letter headed "Shady Election Tactics" repeating the allegations regarding Shri Nariman's unwarranted withdrawal from contest and his voting instructions given at Dadar.

Shri Nariman's own reply to the public allegations was given in a statement which appeared in the *Free Press Journal* of 28th November 1934 wherein he described the rumours and reports as "absolutely false". He admitted his visit to Dadar and said that the suggestion though mooted by some workers at Dadar would have been accepted by him if polling situation did warrant any change from the original instruction to divide the votes equally.

His version was immediately contradicted by one Mr. M. A. Merchant, Bar-at-law in a letter which appeared in the *Sentinel* on 28th November. As one who was in F and G polling booths throughout the day he could call Nariman's statement "misleading". He confirmed the versions already given by others on the spot including Munshiji's election agents, a press reporter and independent observers. "Shri Nariman will be best advised to keep silent over his conduct as regards the different stages of the Assembly elections", he stated.

The net result of the 1934 Assembly election with such an atmosphere at top levels in the Bombay Congress went far beyond the loss of a seat to the Congress or personally to Munshiji. It meant a general loss of prestige for the national organisation, a deplorable slackness in Congress work in the city and decline of public confidence in leading Congressmen. A public controversy raged on the point of these elections for quite a long time, and indeed the controversy projected itself into the election of the party leader for Bombay after the Provincial elections in 1937, as we shall presently see.

Munshiji was one of those Congressmen elected to the Bombay Provincial Legislature in 1937. Even before the elec-

tions, however, the question whether Congressmen should accept offices or not had come to the forefront. Munshiji along with late Shri Satyamurti, was in the vanguard of the fight for acceptance of offices. The Congress was sworn to combating and wrecking the Act, and the bulk of Congressmen seemed to be against any policy that smacked of working it. To go against this current of anti-parliamentarism required no small measure of courage from the outspoken supporters of parliamentarism like Satyamurti or Munshi. That training through parliamentary or administrative work was as essential as any other activity by a people on the march for their freedom was something not generally accepted yet.

The power, even though restricted to the provincial sphere, which the 1935 Act gave the Ministers, the possibility of enlarging the scope of the people's freedom by the exercise of those powers by Congressmen and the prospects of bringing all national activities under one will and increasing the nation's strength to gain the main objective of freedom through wielding of ministerial power were all explained by Munshiji in a series of articles which were published by a number of dailies all over India. In one such article he said:

> Barring the miracles which world war and world revolution are supposed to accomplish, India cannot secure Independence without being an organised nation with an irresistible collective will. Therefore, when we say that the goal of the Congress today is *Purna Swaraj,* we only mean that the goal is to generate national power which will secure such Swaraj in the future. The object of the Congress is to gain the strength with which to win Purna Swaraj.
>
> The history of the Congress during the last thirty years shows how this strength has grown out of the rhythmic movements of our national life. A lull has followed the storm and in its turn has been followed by a still more powerful storm. Every succeeding upheaval has been characterised by an increasingly wider basis and sterner resistance. This was achieved by the Congress, not by shouting impossible slogans or making impatient gestures, but by acquiring a wider control over the life of the people during every period of lull. Congressmen under the direction of leading members of the Congress hierarchy organised them-

selves into voluntary associations for furthering nation-building in its different aspects. Many forms of social organisation in the country like associations, clubs, local boards, educational and civic bodies, and the legislatures were brought under leaders animated by the Congress policy. If khadi had not created an army for selfless workers; if the workers had not spread a spirit of quiet discipline; if their ashrams had not taught organised resistance to evil, if the mercantile associations had not been led to prefer politics to profits; if municipalities had not given Congressmen a hold over civic life in many cities, the nation could not have offered the resistance which it did during three years of Ordinance Rule. The strength thus put forward, no doubt, was inadequate, for the process was spontaneous rather than deliberately planned. At each place, the discipline varied with the quality of the leader; the Working Committee laid down a specific programme of action and numerous Congress Committees carried it out, according to the measure of their ability.

The real objective of the Congress, therefore, is to prepare the country for a new life, a life in which mass movements, characterized by strenuous resistance to all things anti-national, alternate with intensive activity for gaining greater control over all forms of social organisations, governmental and non-governmental. During the present lull, therefore, the Congress has to seek every opportunity to bring all publicly organized activities under the conrtol of well-drilled Congressmen, under the direction of a single will. Gandhiji, with intuition more than policy, appears to have taken a step forward in the right direction. He has evidently decided that all national activities including the legislative activity, should be controlled directly according to a premeditated plan and programme. Only by introducing disciplined action in this way into the different spheres of national life, can the spirit of resistance be kept up and the goal of the Congress achieved.

The Working Committee has therefore to take steps to exercise direct control over as many organisations or activities in the country as possible. It is, then, difficult to understand how by accepting Office and assuming control of the Legislatures, the most powerful governmental association in the province, the Congress would be deflected from its course or fall from grace. Even if there is some chance of utilizing the power and influence of the Constitu-



With Gandhiji at Juhu—Smt. Kasturba, Gandhiji, Shri Mathuradas Tricumji, Smt. Maniben Patel, Sardar Vallabhbhai, **Munshiji**, Smt. Munshi, Shri Rameshvardas Birla

> tion in the interests of the Congress, or of offering resistance to the Special Powers of the Governor, why should it be thrown away? The British Government has created the constitutional safeguards as a check against the power of the Congress; why give up an attempt to break through them and thus play into the hands of the enemy? A Congress group will shoulder responsibility for such an attempt only under the orders of the Working Committee. If the purpose for which it has gone into office is not likely to be secured,' it will be recalled forthwith; if it assists in gathering strength for the Congress, the next upheaval will be so powerful that the nation will have advanced much nearer Swaraj. And to call this co-operation, job-hunting or weakness, is in itself defeatism, ar bespeaks lack of self-confidence, which circumstances do not warrant.

In doing such propaganda for what he firmly believed was the right course, Munshiji of course ran the risk of being dubbed 'office-hunter'. But he would rather be called one than knowingly let the nation lose the benefit of such office acceptance, both short-term and long-term, which the country later realised. Munshiji could never bow to the popular mood, if he thought a different course was dictated by his conscience.

With the return of Congress in majority in 6 out of the 11 Provinces, office acceptance became a live issue. It was well-known that some at least of the top leaders were against it. Gandhiji, however, plumbed for it subject to an assurance from the Viceroy that the Governors would not interfere in the day-to-day administration of their ministers.

In Bombay, that set the scene for a revival of the old controversy centering round Shri Nariman's leadership.

At a conference of the Congress M.L.A.'s and M.L.C.'s of Bombay, which was attended by 99 of them, Shri B. G. Kher (now the Premier of Bombay) was unanimously elected Leader. The public had expected a struggle for power between Munshiji and Shri Nariman. But Munshiji had kept himself out of the fight and help Sardar Vallabhbhai in inducing Shri Kher to accept the leadership.

The Sardar who along with Achyut Patwardhan and Gangadharrao Deshpande, was present at the meeting, took the

chair first, welcomed the legislators and then asked them to select their leader and other office-bearer. With Shri (now the Hon'ble) Mangaldas Pakvasa then duly proposed and seconded to the Chair, nearly two hours' deliberation in camera followed interrupted only by half hour interval for refreshments. Zonal spokesmen were first selected: Sardar for Gujarat, Gangadharrao Deshpande for Karnatak and Shankerrao Deo for Maharashtra. As these spokesmen expressed themselves in favour of the election of Shri Kher as the Party Leader, the proposition was put from the chair and carried with acclamation. Munshiji's own role in the election of Shri Kher as leader was often suspected in the eyes of his critics. Though he had always supported Shri Balasaheb Kher's election, and considered Shri Nariman, in view of his erstwhile role in Congress affairs, unfit for such a responsibility, it is injustice to suggest as was done by some that personal malice influenced his support of Shri Kher or that Kher was selected only as a pawn in the Nariman-Munshi game.

Looking back to the election episode and the development of the Munshi-Nariman rivalry which ended in the latter's dethronement in 1937, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the ability and willingness of Munshiji to place Congress interest above the personal cost him only an election but raised him in people's esteem.

Efforts to revive the lost leadership of Shri Nariman took the form of a furious press propaganda against Sardar Patel and Munshiji for alleged offences of vilification of and underhand means against Shri Nariman. After an unsuccessful appeal to the Working Committee against the election of the Bombay leader Shri Nariman in a letter to Gandhiji alleged a "malignant campaign of vilification started and encouraged by Mr. Munshi and others", specially referring to Sir Cowasji ...gir's success in 1934 elections at the expense of a Con... seat.

As far as the election of the Bombay Party Leader was concerned, as soon as a section of the Bombay press opened a propaganda barrage insinuating that Munshiji was trying to replace Shri Nariman as leader, he communicated to both, to

the Sardar and to the press, that he did not aspire to leadership. When in March 1937 news came that Sjt. Shankerrao Deo and Gangadharrao Deshpande had Shri Kher in mind for leadership, he welcomed the idea and assured Shri Kher personally of his co-operation in case he accepted leadership. At a meeting of the City M.L.A.'s at the Congress House prior to the election of the leader, Shri Nariman who was the president had been asked to convey to Sardar the general wish to have a unanimous election of leader in consultation with the leaders of Maharashtra and Karnatak. Even a day or two before the legislators' meeting on 12th March, when the idea of Shri Kher's leadership was mooted by Shris Shankerrrao Deo and Achyut Patwardhan at Sardar Griha where Shankerrao Deo was lying ill, he suggested that Shri Kher would be an ideal leader and renewed his pledge of support to him. At the election meeting itself, he was among those who appealed for unanimity and suggested that the Sardar and Gangadharrao should find out the person with the largest support in the house in order to make the election unanimous. He also argued with some non-Brahmin members to convince them about the impartiality of and integrity of Shri Kher. Beyond such legitimate limits of democratic procedure Munshiji had neither the inclination nor the need to go in regard to the leader's election.

IX
THE HOME MINISTER

Munshiji's inclusion in the provincial cabinet in Bombay in 1937 was to Bombay public a foregone conclusion. He was widely expected to be the moving spirit of the new cabinet. The *Evening News of India* of the 19th July 1937 speculating in its 'Bombay Man's Diary' gave an estimation of the prospective minister though the speculation itself proved slightly wide of the remark:—

> "Quicksilver" is the word which leaps to mind in connection with Mr. K. M. Munshi. His mental processes are not merely acute but rapid as those who have heard him arguing a brief in the High Court realise. Elfin, curiously bird-like in his movements, restless as a sparrow yet wary as a hawk.

> Mr. Munshi comes to his portfolio it is a million dollars to a torn shirt that he takes over Education with many and some remarkably sound ideas.
>
> A very successful lawyer with a lucrative practice, his taking office in the Provincial Cabinet is a definite sacrifice, for the ministerial remuneration fixed by his party at Rs. 500/- is very small money compared with his professional earnings.

On the following day in the same column it had to publish a failure of the forecast along with an appreciation of the choice.

> "As a lawyer of keen wit and having considerable experience himself of Law and Order, acquired in the good old days of disobedience, Mr. Munshi is well-fitted to discharge his new responsibilities."

The Congress had accepted office with a view to wreck the Government of India Act, 1935. Gandhiji had secured an assurance from the then Viceroy that the Provincial Governors would not ordinarily exercise their special responsibilities and discretionary powers vested in them under the Constitution Act without first consulting the Ministry. When the popular Ministries commenced attending to their work there was a widespread feeling that the Services were in league with the Governors and that what transpired between the Governor and the Secretaries at their frequent meetings would be kept back from the Ministers. It was also then feared that the Ministries would come into conflict with the Governors and the Services on the question of the release of political prisoners, and in Bombay, on the question of the return of forfeited lands. There was thus a tense atmosphere during the first six months when almost everything was considered serious enough to give rise to a constitutional crisis. But so far as Munshiji was concerned he went ahead in right earnest tackling all the problems of the departments entrusted to him.

A NEW FREEDOM

On the 1st August 1937, i.e., within a fortnight of the Congress assuming the office in the Province, Munshiji issued a *communique* on behalf of Government seeking to give the people an awareness of the enlargement of their freedom and installing in them a new confidence in the popular Government.

The *communique* assured the public that "early steps are being taken by legislative measures to amend such laws as unduly fetter the legitimate and peaceful activities of the citizens." It further gave assurances for the protection of civil liberties and fundamental rights of citizens, remedying of hardships due to the exercise of emergency powers in the past. Lest the new Liberty be mistaken as license, the *communique,* however, warned:

> "While Government will do their best to maintain the civil liberties of the people, it must be realised that it is their primary duty to take all steps to prevent the dissemination of class hatred and ideas involving the use of organised or unorganised violence in the furtherance of any object."

Building upon the assurance that Gandhiji had secured from Lord Linlithgow Munshiji lost no time to get certain conventions established in order to prevent gubernatorial incursion into the task of day-to-day administration.

> (1) That whenever a civilian secretary of a department saw the Governor in connection with a matter pertaining to his department and falling within the provincial sphere he should as a practice inform the Minister concerned as early as possible of the matter brought by him to the notice of the Governor; and
>
> (2) that there should be no matter which affected the Province and on which the Governor was required to act by reason of any of the powers laid upon him by the Constitution Act, the discussion of which is not shared with Ministers.

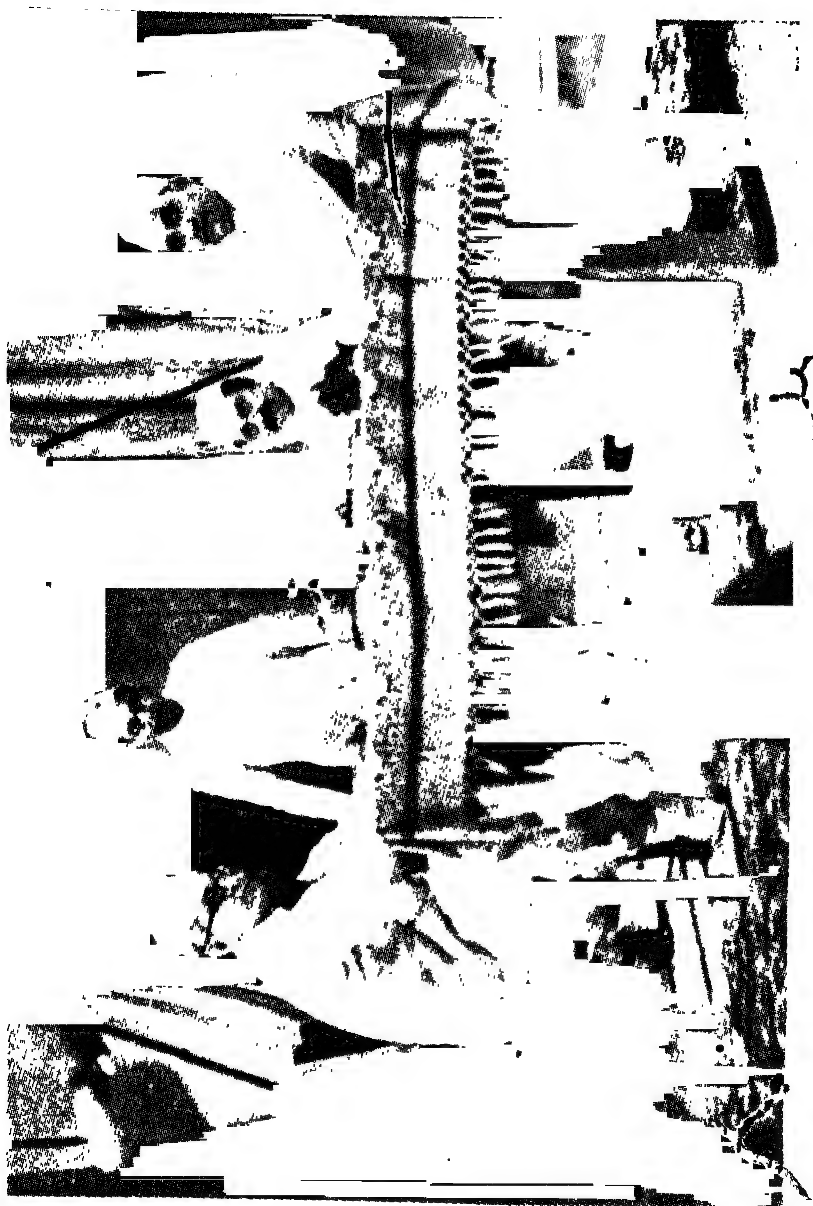
Dr. Bool Chand, M.A., Ph.D., (London), thus describes the situation with which the popular ministries had to contend and Munshiji's attempts to transform the whole machinery of the provincial government with the aid of such new conventions:

> The machinery of Provincial Governments (then mainly in British hands) consisted of the Civil Service, whose Chiefs were the Commissioners; of the Police, the I.G.P.; of the Judiciary, the I.C.S. District Judges. The powers of those high officials—mostly British or Indians

attuned to British outlook—were conducted and supervised by the Secretaries under the vigilant eye of the Chief Secretary. The pay, prospects and promotions of most of those officers were governed by rules which could not be touched by the legislature but only by the Secretary of State, whose representative was the Governor. The Chief Secretary, the Commissioners, and the I.G.P., were mostly British, bound to the Governor by ties of race and tradition and formed an instinctive pro-British alliance against Indians anxious to secure and exercise new found power. Their social contacts gave them scope for comparing notes and taking decisions. Against this trained and serried phalanx the ministries had to assert the authority of the elected legislature. The special powers and responsibilities of the Governors and the Governor General apart, the Act by itself was more than sufficient to disable any Minister. The Act amply preserved at all effective points the Governor's discretionary power, including the power to dismiss a Minister as distinguished from the dismissal of the Premier or the dissolution of the legislature. In matters of discipline the higher officials had a right to appeal to the Governor or the Secretary of State. The Civilian Secretary had direct access to the Governor behind the Minister's back. Finally, all orders had to be issued by and under the signature of the Secretary.

The Congress Ministry with the aid of these new conventions broke into the bureaucratic wall, and established the team spirit of the Cabinet and ended the dominance of the Governor.

As soon as the Ministry assumed charge, Munshiji, as Home Minister, gave his attention to these matters, and through his vigilance the gubernatorial dominance was systematically brought to an end. As the result of a general assurance given by the Secretary of State and the Governor-General the Governor's exercise of his admittedly enormous discretionary power became an impossibility. The Ministry decided to act as a single unit on all important matters, with the result that the Cabinet meeting became in effect a dialogue between the Governor and the Minister concerned backed by all the colleagues. Daily closed door Ministerial conferences were held and resulted in a unanimity of view, which baffled all ranks of the bureaucracy. In order to maintain the unity of the Cabinet members, it was decided to observe the following procedure even in routine matters:—



(*a*) If a Minister had noted his views on a file another Minister to whom the file came would not note views expressing contrary opinion.

(*b*) He would meet the first noting Minister, talk over the matter with him and then the views formed in consultation would be substituted for the first note.

(*c*) In case the Ministers were not able to agree between themselves the matter would be placed before the daily meeting of the Ministers.

(*d*) If papers belonging to one Department were required by a Minister of another Department he would call for them through the Minister who was in charge of the Department.

(*e*) After the papers had been looked into by the Minister who had called for them and if he desired to make a formal note he could do so, but he would not make it a part of the records without the consent of the Minister who was the administrative head of the Department.

A convention was established that the Secretary would make a record of his conversation with the Governor whenever he interviewed him, thus ensuring that the Governor would consult the Minister in all actions which he proposed to take in matters subject under the Act to his discretion. As in other matters, so in matters of discipline against the higher services, the Ministers made it a rule that the recommendation would be unanimous, thus leaving to the Governor no alternative but to accept the recommendation or to dismiss the Ministry.

All this inevitably resulted in making the Ministry a compact instrument of popular power. And whenever an occasion arose in the actual administration of affairs Munshiji did not fail to establish a constitutional point or lay down a constitutional principle effectively reducing the ambit of the Governor's discretionary authority and necessarily enlarging the scope of the authority of the Ministry.

To cite just two examples here, regarding correspondence with the Secretary of State and the Governor-General, Munshiji objected to the suggestion that Ministers might send their representations to the Governor for transmission to the Secretary of State or the Governor-General. In his view such a procedure would reduce the Ministers to the position of ordi-

nary public men submitting representations to the Governor for being forwarded to the Government of India or the Secretary of State.

As the Governor was the constitutional head of the Provincial Government and all executive actions had to be performed in his name, he held, it would be constitutionally incorrect, and also not in accordance with the practice followed in the Dominions.

Similarly the Public Service Commission of Bombay had carried on in the early days of the Ministry a continuous warfare against all departments of Government for what it considered the infringement of its statutory rights. Munshiji pointed out the correct constitutional relationship between the Government and the Public Service Commission. "The Public Service Commission," he contended "was a device which provides a detached agency for non-party recruitment and protected a popular Ministry from constant charges of favouritism. This did not imply that the Public Service Commission should be allowed to play a role of monitor to the Government. For the Government to concede such claim would be to abdicate its *right* of appointment. When the Government asked for more than one name for a post, it clearly implied that it retained the right to choose from among the candidates selected by the Public Service Commission. The Commission was not a quasi-independent organ like the judiciary. Constitutionally it was a Committee appointed by the Government and vested with certain statutory powers for the attainment of a particular object."

In the history of India's struggle for freedom, the Country has passed through many vicissitudes, and diverse phrases of the fight itself, and office acceptance, of which Munshiji was always one of the staunchest advocates, held no glamour for him except as another and a very effective vantage-ground whence to conduct the battle with greater vigour, better resources and much needed experience in the art of public administration. Thus the new conventions he worked for and achieved in the Governor-ministry relations were so many events wrought into the walls of the enemy fortress, the cap-

ture of which has consistently been the aim and endeavour of Munshiji. His achievement in this sphere can now be seen both as a step, often overlooked, in the continual revolution against alien rule and a vindication of his far-sighted, is often lonely, stand for the acceptance of ministerial responsibility even in the limited provincial sphere.

LAW AND ORDER

The maintenance of peace on the basis of friendly relations and mutually reciprocated goodwill between the Hindus and Muslims was a problem which to many has appeared as defying a solution. Munshiji tackled the problem with his usual earnestness and firmness and that policy was announced in no mistakable terms in the course of a *communique*:

> "The policy of the present Government with regard to Hindu-Muslim questions is to foster an attitude of mutual respect and reciprocity of adjustments between all communities in matters connected with religious observances, with due regard to their feelings and sentiments. Harmonious relations between the two communities can only be achieved if leaders and newspapers of both communities cease to carry on a recriminatory campaign against each other."

When a debate was raised in the Assembly on this *communique* by an adjournment motion by Mr. S. L. Karandikar, Munshiji on the 17th of August 1937 confirmed that determination unequivocally: "Government with all the resources at their command will endeavour ruthlessly to stamp out anything which tends to endanger the maintenace of harmonious relations between the two major communities."

That ruthless determination sometimes drew the severe criticism of opponents who would rather see an occasional riot or two than forego the doubtful 'rights' of the *goonda* and his supporters. But it is now widely admitted that the seeming ruthlessness alone saved the city from bloodbath at least on two occasions, when as Home Minister Munshiji crushed riots that broke out in Bombay in August 1938 and 1939 within the

space of a few hours' time, and established his claim to be one of the ablest administrators of the day.

Munshiji could cure *riotitis*—the disease of riot—mainly on the strength of a keen study of its cause and remedies. Dr. Bool Chand referring to it says:

> Knowing that riots are a chronic feature of the Indian body politic, Munshiji had undertaken a study of the riot evil in the same way as doctors make a study of any other disease. *Riotitis*, says Munshiji, is a disease, which affects a society and impels its sections to revert to jungle law. Tendency to this disease is found in all societies, and the two processes by which it can be controlled are (1) the persistent propagation of the desirability of common fields of activity in place of the combative or mutually repulsive ones, and (2) the exertion by the Police force of a steady and coercive pressure upon the violent elements in society. The first process is long and laborious and in order that it may succeed it is most necessary that periodic outbursts of *riotitis* are controlled by the action of the police in such a way that the violent minded people get out of the habit of resorting to violent ways.
>
> A riot will occur only when the forces of law and order are tither, inadequate or untrained to function impartially or effectively and promptly. Prompt action on the part of these forces becomes difficult when matters affecting civil rights are let to be decided in a community by administrative inquiries rather than by judicial process. All attempts to hold inquiries and patch-up truces result in making the position of the executive officer extremely difficult. Instead of being maintained in awesome neutrality as preserver of public peace, an executive officer is thrown into a whirlpool of passion. He is watched by rival factions. He is fawned upon or suspected. His inquiries rouse passions. If he is transferred, his successor is again made the victim of rival attentions. In the midst of conflicting claims and rising tempers his judgment is warped by the prospect of a possible breach of peace.
>
> In disturbances, for instance, connected with music before mosque, the executive instead of emphasising the civil rights of citizens to use public roads, more often than not, become victims of the sections which can threaten breach of peace. In the result the executive, instead of protecting the citizen in the enjoyment of his civil rights,

becomes the instrument of the overbearing to coerce the timid.

The police as the main instrument in the hands of the State in its attempts to quell the riots have often been the target of criticism from many sides and Munshiji's efforts to keep them above suspicion are worthy of note. To quote Dr. Bool Chand again:

> It is true that the police force in India, like other services, is not free from communal bias. When the whole country is affected by communal excitement, the policeman alone cannot remain unaffected. There is also the lack of proper training. In the police training school everything is taught except the most essential, viz: the role of the police as social servants. In the best of the police forces in India officers of one community watch officials of the other with a peculiar anxiety lest the latter may favour their co-religionists. There have been cases where officers of one community have retailed stories of partiality on the part of their colleagues of the other religion. Various devices have been employed to rid the police force of its communal bias. Hindu police has been engaged to keep watch in Muslim localities, and Muslim police. in Hindu localities. No device can be really effective unless there is strict supervision and stringent action against every derelict. Munshiji has suggested that it would have a very healthy effect if after every major outbreak of violence there is a thorough public inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the outbreak, the adequacy of the measures adopted, and the action of the police in preventing or supressing the outbreak. This will provide a great safeguard against communalism in the force.

His policy in dividing the 'fruits' of communal riots between the offenders was based on strict justice. An illustration of his simple justice can be given. There was discussion regarding the principle on which compensation for damages arising from a riot can be justified. Munshiji said that althought it was proper that the community which harbours a riotous element must pay the loss suffered by the innocent citizen, it would be wrong to exact this payment from a particular ward of the city. "In Bombay the ward is not an independent entity. The ward in which a riot takes place is often

not responsible for it and certainly not the landlords in that ward who may be living elsewhere. Levying compensation from a particular ward has this curious factor, that the landlords of an injured community will have to pay for what their own community has suffered and the aggressor community is immune from "the burden." The equitable manner in which compensation can be recovered is to levy it on the whole city. The principle of exemption is unjust and leads to a keen sense of injustice behind. "I see no reason," he added, "to distinguish a J.P. Land-lord from an ordinary one, and to one who has some experience of Bombay it is too much to say that J.P.'s and knights had never any hand in riots." He argued against granting any exemption whatever.

Munshiji is very much remembered these days for the way in which he curbed two riots during the period that he was Home Minister. When the riots started, in both cases the indications were that they would assume serious proportions. On the 17th of April 1938 Munshiji had returned to Bombay from Hubli after cutting short his programme by a few days. His return to City was so timely as to enable him to take stern measures to put down an outbreak of communal rioting which had rudely shattered the peace of the city, the casualties within an hour of the outbreak being 5 killed and about 65 injured. The Commissioner of Police was out of Bombay. Munshiji after a visit to the affected areas, held a conference at the Police Headquarters, as a result of which Order under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code prohibiting gatherings of five or more people, and the carrying of lethal weapons was issued by the Chief Presidency Magistrate, and a curfew was enforced as from that very day between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The Police were instructed to pick up all known bad characters and on the very first day the number picked up was considerable. A temporary prison was opened at Worli D.D. Chawls for housing these persons. The blows of the *goonda* elements came hard and in swift succession.

Munshiji created for the first time in the country the convention even now observed of merely giving the total number of casualties without stating them communitywise. To

enable the Press to get authentic news, arrangements were made at the Head Police Office to give the facts to newspapermen from time to time. In spite of the assurances given by the newspaper editors in the City some papers persisted in giving speculative details, with the result that orders had to be served on five of them by the Chief Presidency Magistrate directing them not to publish any news or comments relating to the riots without the censorship of the Director of Information. These conventions grew up because the Editors agreed at Munshiji's request a day after the riots had started, to co-operate with the Government by refraining from publishing the casualties of the riots in terms of communities.

Within two days the city had returned to normal though the feeling of nervousness continued for a couple of days more in localities with mixed population.

Immediately these disturbances were over, necessary amendments to the Bombay City Police Act authorising the Commissioner of Police to deport anyone whom he regarded as a dangerous or undesirable person was taken on hand. and the Hindu and the Muslim group whom Munshiji consulted were in favour of such legislation. A bill to empower the Commissioner of Police to direct any person to remove himself from the City if, in his opinion, the man's presence, movements or acts are such as are calculated to cause danger or alarm, or a reasonable suspicion that unlawful designs are entertained by such persons, was introduced at the next session of the Assembly by Munshiji and carried through with all expedition. During the debate on the Bill Munshiji gave an indication of his determination to leave no stone unturned to see that the peace of the City was not left to the mercy of hooligans.

Then again, for some days prior to the 1st of August 1939 certain individuals belonging to interests opposed to Prohibition had set afloat rumours that disturbances and outbreak of communal rioting would accompany the inauguration of Prohibition in the City on that day. Strong precautionary measures had been made as if in full expectation of a major emergency. The day was marked by a number of processions in various parts of the City including the mammoth procession

and meeting at the Azad Maidan under the auspices of the Prohibition Propaganda Board.

A procession which had been decided upon by the Muslim League—as a protest not against Prohibition but against the Urban Immoveable Property Tax—was taken out from Mahomedally Road to Chhota Quabrastan on Grant Road. After passing Pydhowni junction the processionists became very provocative and when the procession reached the Northbrook gardens there was actually a melee between the crowd of Hindus that had gathered there and the processionists. At the same time a large number of Mahomedans numbering over a thousand were awaiting the procession in Chhota Quabrastan, a short distance away. As the procession reached Chhota Quabrastan it became restive and the police with great difficulty persuaded them to get into the Chhota Quabrastan. The moment they were in, stone throwing on a large-scale at the Police officials and the trams passing by was indulged in by the people inside. Inspite of repeated appeals and warnings the crowd persisted in pelting stones, and some of them created scenes even outside. The stone throwing caused injuries to four or five conductors and drivers of tram cars besides the Police Officials. Admittedly, at this point there were only Mahomedans. One of the miscreants attempted to smash the head of a Police official with a stone. When the situation worsened and became uncontrollable the Police had to resort to firing in self-defence. In all twenty rounds were fired and seven persons were injured.

The action of the authorities was the subject-matter of an inquiry by Mr. Justice Broomfield who however held that the action of the Police authorities in firing in self-defence was justified.

This incident at Chhota Quabrastan was expected to develop into a major communal disturbance and all necessary precautions were immediately taken as in the case of a communal riot. But thanks to the completeness of Police preparations under the guidance of Munshiji against such a possibility, not a single case of stray assault followed the incidents at Chhota Quabrastan.

The fear that Munshiji had created in the minds of the miscreants at the previous attempt at such disturbances was sufficient to unnerve them from indulging in a repetition of their nefarious activities.

Within a very few days of accepting office Munshiji had laid down a definite policy with regard to Hindu-Muslim riots. That policy meant *inter alia* (a) that officers should not be tempted into suggesting or pursuing new methods of avoiding communal riots, lest they gave an impression to the rival communities that something could be gained by insistence or show of force;

(b) that officers should not invite leaders of rival communities to meet them in a conference to settle the dispute; this only involves tension between leaders, daily meetings of the respective leaders, inflammatory speeches and absurd claims;

(c) that officers should abstain from pressing any party to come to a compromise; they should only make it clear that it was the duty of the parties to come to a compromise themselves and on their failure to do so within a stated time law would be maintained;

(d) that the civil right of one community to pass over a particular road by procession should not be denied;

(e) that attempts should not be made to permit diversion of procession to subsidiary roads;

(f) that in making the orders the sensitiveness of the Muslim community to music before mosques should be respected and in cases where there has not been a decision of the Court or an award or a compromise to the contrary, music should be stopped before mosques and say for about twenty yards on either side;

(g) that wherever there has been decision of a civil Court or an award or a recorded compromise the same should be scrupulously respected and enforced;

(h) that whatever orders are issued by the officials should be made without previous discussions with the leaders of the Communities and without giving any impression that the matters are improving;

(i) that it is not enough to do justice or to maintain peace impartially, but it is essential that an impression should be created that justice is done and law is maintained impartially.

Justice meted out with fearlessness is what is needed for the successful maintenance of law and order. Respect for law and democratic readiness to accept responsibility are essential in the task of preserving the sanctity of that law and ensuring its observance. These Munshiji had in abundance and the success therefore was only deserved.

POLICE AS PUBLIC SERVANTS

During his own tenure as Home Minister Munshiji took ample care to see that the police force in his province was maintained in as high a state of efficiency as possible. He made ruthless inquiries into cases of harassment and oppression by the police in the process of their investigation, and did not hesitate to punish officers and men responsible for such harassment and oppression. Nevertheless when the Broomfield Inquiry Committee's Report was submitted to Government, he publicly recorded his appreciation of the splendid work done by the police. In August 1939, when the question was raised of retrenching the salary, allowance and concessions of the Police force, he strongly opposed the suggestion. He said:

> 'The police, is highly organised force; that is its strength. But that makes it highly sensitive to changes in its pay and privileges. A police officer is a citizen who hires out not merely his office hours but all his time and energy, and at times even his life for maintaining conditions in which alone we can hope to survive the difficulties which are ranged against us.'

In his own administration of affairs, Munshiji set before his police force a steady example of justice and fairness, and it had its effect upon the meanest policeman in the force under his supervision and control.

Presiding over the Police Conference on the 27th of September, 1937 Munshiji referring to the functions of the Police

force as a whole placed before it the ideals which he felt ought to inspire it. His attempt to make the police aware of the new conditions and the new methods and manner of service under a popular Government showed his earnestness to convert the police from being the agents of torture to the servants of democracy.

"Under the new conditions the Police cannot consider themselves merely as upholders of law and order. They have to be guardians of peace and democracy; and as such they have to pursue their arduous duties not only with firmness, but tact, patience and sympathy. The easy method of maintaining prestige by inspiring fear need not be resorted to by such a well trained and efficient force as yours. Uphold law by all means without fear and favour, with good humour and without being vindictive; pursue your duties in the spirit of service towards the public, the master whom we all serve; maintain, not only order, but the reputation of the Government and the dignity of democratic institutions in this Country; give the same unswerving loyalty to the present Government as you gave to its predecessors, and I assure you that the present Government, with the public confidence which it has the privilege to enjoy, will maintain your prestige and your authority more effectively than ever was done before.

"No state can exist if this most essential service is infected with the communal virus. It is not concerned with communities nor with political preferences. It has to keep the ring clear for legitimate freedom of speech and action, controlling all violent tendencies. But in this matter as a public man let me warn you that the ultimate success or failure of the efforts will largely depend upon the tact which the Police bring to bear upon a situation.

"It is better that an officer should honestly confess his inability to investigate a crime, it is better by far, to let an accused go unconvicted than that the ends of justice be secured by torture.

"But I long to see the day when the Force attains the same dignity, esteem and even the affection of the people here as are enjoyed by the Police in London. Without a Police Force trusted and respected by the public, Democracy can never be successful. It is for you, Gentlemen, to co-operate with me in a concrete way to realise this objective."

One of the greatest reforms to Munshiji's credit was the amalgamation of the cadre of the European Sergeants and the Indian Sub-Inspectors. How impressive this achievement was can be appreciated only by those who know how long-standing and intensive was the grievance on this score of the Indian Personnel of the Police force in Bombay.

Munshiji issued orders for the amalgamation of the cadres of Sergeants and Sub-Inspectors to be known as the Sub-Inspectors' cadre. The pay scales and conditions of service of the new Sub-Inspectors' cadre was to be the same as those of the Sub-Inspectors' cadre and recruits would be confined ordinarily to statutory natives of India. The Anglo-Indians and Domiciled Europeans who would be recruited in future would be recruited as Sub-Inspectors and on the same pay and conditions as Indian Sub-Inspectors, but Sergeants then in service were to draw their pay and allowances on the existing scale. In order to equalise the rate of promotion of qualified men then serving as Sergeant and Sub-Inspectors to the rank of Dy.-Inspectors it was laid down that in future out of every five vacancies three posts would go to Sub-Inspectors and two to Sergeants, instead of the then existing rule whereby a Sergeant and a Sub-Inspector was promoted alternatively. A single list of Sub-Inspectors qualified for promotion was to be maintained after the exhaustion of the then existing list.

Other provinces did not take the step of amalgamating the two cadres as according to them the duties of the two cadres in their respective provinces were distinct. A remark by a Congress ex-Premier in this respect would be read with interest:

> Much as we might like our men, and they are good in some matters, the soldier is more efficient in some other things. At present, I am not sure that we would do well to blend the two into one service. Ultimately, we should get rid of them. But personally, I would like to have more time to think about the subject. Your action may perhaps force my hands.

Munshiji was cognizant that the success of any administration depended very largely upon the character of the police

force. Corruption existed in the police force in India much more than in any other department of Government, except perhaps Excise. He took strong measures to check corruption and to otherwise increase the efficiency of the force. But he also pleaded for a more sympathetic and understanding public attitude towards the police. He deplored that on occasions speakers at public meetings indulged in attacks on the police and employed even abuses and contemptuous epithets while referring to that public service. Such malicious or irresponsible criticism was likely to lower the efficiency of the services and impair the usefulness of the Government itself. Munshiji succeeded in creating a sense of harmony between the public and the police.

At the Home Ministers' Conference he advocated two reforms (a) an all-India Constabulary (b) and a central school for Indian police. Both reforms are yet on paper.

Mr. N. P. A. Smith, now the Director of the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India, was the Commissioner of Police in Bombay when Munshiji was the Home Minister. He pays a tribute to Munshiji's work in the following words:

> I had the good fortune to serve under Mr. K. M. Munshi in two capacities: as officiating Commissioner of Police, Bombay, and as Joint Secretary to Government in the Home Department. Such interest—to anybody but myself—as may lie in my impressions of him from these two angles will naturally derive mainly from the then still unusual circumstances of an official relationship between a Congress Minister of Government and an officer of the Indian Police. Not, you might say, ideal bed-fellows. The representative of a nationalist movement which, both in its deliberate manifestations and in its fortuitous consequences, had frequently arrayed itself against the law; and the local head of a police force whose function it had been to maintain the law. The stress of long conflict had at times provoked ungenerous action on both sides and had at times also frayed tempers sadly, again, if we are honest, on both sides. Would the Congress Ministry and would, in particular, the Home Minister repay old scores aganist zealous—even, if you wish, over-zealous—members, both officers and men, of the police world? Such was the ques-

tion the police asked each other. Would individuals be victimised? Mr. Munshi provided the answer. It took some little time for realisation to dawn that party prejudice was no part of his disciplinary make-up, but dawn it did and, speaking as a policeman, I can pay no more remarkable tribute to Mr. Munshi than to say that police officers today in Bombay City speak gratefully, and even affectionately, of the staunchness of his support. I recall a day when at a meeting in the Secretariat over which Mr. Munshi presided and which was attended by several officials, he declared his administrative faith. "I have been accused by X", he said, X being a very important man in the party organisation, "of supporting the police too strongly. I told him that this was only natural as I am now a policeman." It would be unfair to a very fine body of men not to give the other side of the picture. They recognised with a remarkable promptness that they owed allegiance to the authorised government of the day and, I think Mr. Munshi will agree, gave him, despite the irritation of much uninformed and some malicious criticism by the public, the full measure of their loyal support. In brief, the police reacted admirably to just treatment and the wise statesmanship of a Minister who realised that no government can function efficiently without an efficient and loyal police force. It will be patent that, in these circumstances, my task as Commissioner of Police, if not exactly a bed of roses—it never can be—was not the Congressional hair-shirt which, in my unwisdom, I might perhaps have anticipated. Instead, I found in Mr. Munshi one of the kindliest and most helpful official superiors under whom it has been my lot to serve.

My experience of him, from my table as Joint Secretary, was not very long-lived for the reason that the Congress Ministry detached itself from government. Another facet of his administrative character was, however, obvious even in this brief period; and that was his communal impartiality. He laid down broad principles for the treatment of communal disputes, and these were scrupulously observed by the succeeding government and may, for aught I know, be still observed. The British eye is at all times keen to spot discriminate treatment. I was impressed instead by Mr. Munshi's determination to adhere rigidly to the completely impartial, if firm, principles he had himself formulated. My respect was the greater in that

the communal nettle was one from which the British themselves have always, somewhat timorously, shrunk.

A few general comments in conclusion. If I were asked to specify Mr. Munshi's most prominent characteristic, I should be at a loss to choose between his tirelessness, his obvious intellectual capacity and his drive, but running through all these is a thread which is vital to the whole. Mr. Munshi, despite his lack of stature—I am sure he will forgive me—is big. He is big in his concepts, big in his tolerances and big in his friendships. He is big also in the possession of world views which aid, and do not conflict with, his strong nationalism.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

The question of civil liberties, on which the Congress stood pledged, was naturally a ticklish one for a Home Minister expected to grant it in fullest measure to a people accustomed only to the complete denial of it. To a degree of moderation in the exercise of the liberties, so necessary in a free society, the people were not used. Munshiji's announcement on the point read:

> While Government will do their best to maintain civil liberties of the people, it must be realised that it is their primary duty to take all steps to prevent the dissemination of class hatred and of ideas involving the use of organised or unorganised violence in furtherance of every object.

Replying to a debate on a cut motion by Mr. S. V. Parulekar at the first session of the Assembly Munshiji on 15th September 1937, expounded his policy which was no doubt formulated after consultations with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhiji:

> Government are aware of the sentiments of the members of the House on the question of the orders restricting the movement of certain persons under the Special Powers (Emergency Act), Government were fully aware of the pledges given by the Congress in the election manifesto. So far they had done their best to carry out the pledges, given by the Congress both in letter and spirit, and would further endeavour to carry them out.
>
> The few cases which remained to be considered required the most careful attention, particularly in view of the fact that the persons and organisations concerned had

contacts in more than one province in India. Government proposed to deal with emergency legislation as early as possible. A Government by Congressmen pledged to non-violence in the struggle for freedom, should be the last to resort to emergency legislation in normal times. They have to prove by their actions that they can preserve peace better by normal authority than by the use of force. In this endeavour to establish the moral authority of Government, they rely upon the goodwill and active support of all concerned.

During the debate the opposition had criticised Government for their inability to release V. B. Gogte, who was undergoing a term of imprisonment, for the attempted assassination in 1931 of Sir Earnest Hotson, then acting Governor of Bombay. Munshiji at the conclusion of his debate dramatically announced that V. B. Gogte had been released and in fact was in the House witnessing the debate.

Shri K. M. Firodia (now the Hon'ble the Speaker of the Bombay Legislative Assembly), recollecting this incident in the Assembly writes:

> I happened to be his co-worker in the last Assembly and I was very glad to be able to work with him in the Legislature. Munshiji is a brilliant scholar, a distinguished constitutional lawyer and as such he has made his mark in the history of our country. One incident about his work in the Assembly which I very prominently remember is the occasion of the debate on the demand for grant in the budget on which the question of civil liberties was raised. The opponents had very well arrayed against him by putting forward their trump card that several persons were behind the bars and specially the one who had attacked Mr. Hotson, Governor of Bombay, when he visited the Fergusson College. The opposition thought that it was not a possibility to secure release of Gogte, the assailant of the Governor very easily and they, therefore had made it their point to press it on the notice of the House. Munshiji had seen this already and he had so arranged the things that many of his party men also did not know as to what was going to happen. Munshiji had secured the assent of Hotson, the Governor, that he had no objection if Gogte could be released in view of the betterment of his career. Gogte was already released and asked to sit in the gallery on the

very day on which this debate was raised. The feelings of both sides were roused to the highest by very severe comments from the opposition when Munshiji rose to reply. People hardly knew how Munshiji was going to meet the situation, but he having arranged it so cleverly, turned the whole scales against his opponents by announcing in the House that not only that Mr. Gogte was released but he was sitting in the gallery hearing the whole debate. This incident was very cleverly arranged and gone through.

The question of Communists was difficult to tackle on account of their veiled threat to the Congress Governments that any interference with the workers' right to strike would result in their organising a general strike in Bombay which with all its repercussions was unimaginable when the Congress was just getting into the saddle.

On the 16th December 1937 addressing the Indian and European Progressive Groups at the Taj Mahal Hotel, Munshiji thus drew the line between liberty and license, much to the annoyance of those who mistook one for the other.

> Civil liberty is not license; it is not absence of restraint; it is a very positive thing which gives to every man under democratic institutions the opportunity of expressing his real self intellectually as well as socially through speech and association. By its very nature, civil liberty implied rights of free speech and association as also an atmosphere in which each individual could exercise his right consistently with the rights of others. Such a democracy could only exist when there was complete absence of coercion, in short when non-violence prevailed. If direct or indirect coercion was permitted, if a few could destroy the rights of many, civil liberty would come to an end. The absence of coercion should be secured, first by the people accepting and following non-violence as their creed, and secondly, by restraining the coercion exercised by those whose creed or programme was not based on honest non-violence. In the present age, coercion had been reduced to a fine art.
>
> The Congress stands for the liberty of the individual, because it has unshaken faith in democracy and non-violence. Liberty for us is not a matter of material benefit. It is not to be weighed in the scales of a materialistic interpretation of history. Liberty with us has its own charms. To speak, to act, to breathe freely under the Gov-

ernment of God and Laws is a sacred privilege. We believe in it irrespective of the benefit it brings with it, and to the last breath will every Congressman who believes in democracy stand by liberty irrespective of anything else. The reason is very simple. Civil liberty is really the foundation of democratic government. Democracy implies a faith that society can evolve gradually and properly by mutual discussion and persuasion rather than by breaking each other's heads. But civil liberty presupposes that there must be an atmosphere of non-violence in which people can discuss each other's opinion freely without the coercion of individual or mass violence. That is a fundamental limitation of the principle of civil liberty in an atmosphere surcharged with such excitement as seeks a breach of the peace.

The Criminal Tribes Settlement in the province was another score which was exploited by the critics of Government for attacking its policy of Civil Liberties. Some of the members of the Settlement were incited by the Communists at Sholapur to create trouble. Munshiji appointed a Committee, with himself as Chairman, to go into the question of Criminal Tribes Settlements in the province and as a result of the inquiries of the Committee which visited all the Settlements in the province a number of reforms were introduced which gave the members of the Settlement more freedom and also opportunity to get over their criminal tendencies.

"To do what we will is natural liberty, to do what we will consistently with the interests of the community to which we belong, is civil liberty; that is to say, the only liberty to be desired in a state of civil society," said Paley. It is that conception of civil liberty that seems to have actuated Munshjii in his efforts to secure the fullest possible liberty for the individual, in speech, thought and action subject only to the needs of the community at large. Those who sought to create an atmosphere of terror and coercion had to be coerced in turn by the Government in order to provide the essential liberties to the larger community. It is true that such an attitude proved greatly unpopular with large sections of Congressmen and others. It was natural too for a people still unused to the responsibilities of liberty to claim unlimited rights on the ground

of civil liberties. But with the turn events have taken in the country since then, and the results of lack of governmental coercion against those who indulge in campaigns of hate and social warfare so evident, a general recognition has been dawning on the public of late that Munshiji's conception of civil liberties as a positive virtue to be safeguarded from those who abuse it is essentially sound and far-sighted.

COMMUNISTS AND RIGHT TO STRIKE

Bombay as the industrial capital of India was already the scene of troubles in the employer-employees relations, particularly in the Textile Industry. The Communists were active in the Labour Front instilling into them the doctrine of the Divine Right to strike which so often ended in the 'right' to intimidate workers who did not fall in with their party line. Munshiji had a private interview with a member of the Polit-bureau of the Communist Party, in which he begged him to give time to the Congress Government. He was told that "as a revolutionary body, it must remain the sole judge as to when and how to strike." Munshiji took up the challenge.

To tolerate the consequent violence of a section of the people would have been an abdication of the State's responsibilities; and the Government found itself compelled to assume emergency powers. Then began a battle between the Home Minister and the Communist Party. In an interview to the *Bombay Chronicle* published in its issue of the 17th of November 1937 Munshiji gave his reasons for putting into operation these emergency powers:

> "In both cities (Ahmedabad and Sholapur) the situation brought about is such that small groups of persons carry on a campaign of criminal intimidation against larger bodies of workmen. Vociferous abuses and threats are indulged in and violence resorted to. Those who are thus intimidated cannot naturally pick up courage to report to the police or make a formal complaint. The Congress policy, as I understand it, does not mean that Government should sit with folded hands when violence is used by word and action to intimidate people. With a view to making it possible for culprits to be brought to book in the absence

of any complaint from the aggrieved party which by the nature of things are not likely to come forward, Government have been obliged to make an offence under section 506 of the Indian Penal Code a cognizable and non-bailable one."

Such a measure, of course, did not deprive the arrested persons of the right of trial and of appeal. Nor was the right of peaceful picketing taken away, and the Police had instructions to "maintain a strictly neutral attitude so long as an atmosphere of non-violence is maintained by the strikers and then only interfere to protect peaceful citizens from pursuing lawful activities and to bring offenders to trial".

This question of strikes and intimidations soon came to a head with the deliberate policy of the Communists in the city to foment industrial trouble and the equally determined attitude of the Home Minister to prevent violence, if necessary with the aid of violence.

The Communists were waiting for an opportunity to organise a province-wide strike. To start with, their campaign against the Government was on the question of the release of the Communists. After the Communists were released they wanted to utilise the report of the Textile Enquiry Committee for creating labour trouble but the same had to be given up as the recommendations of the Committee were more liberal than what was expected by the workers themselves. The Communists also joined the Peasants' March organised by Dr. Ambedkar and his Independent Labour Party.

When the draft bill of the Industrial Trade Disputes Act was circulated for public opinion, the Trade Unions under the Communists did welcome the measure and were of the opinion that the proposals in the draft bill were "sound in certain respects". After the receipt of opinions, amongst others, from several Trade Unions which were controlled by Communists the Bill was drafted and introduced in the Assembly on the 2nd of September 1938. As a protest against the passing of the Industrial Trade Disputes Bill by the Assembly the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress at its meeting held on the 24th September 1938 passed a resolution for a one-day

strike and appointed a Council of Action to give effect to the resolution. The strike was originally fixed upon for the 17th October 1938, but the Organisers, perhaps in order to have more time, postponed it to the 7th of November 1938.

Prior to the 7th of November 1938 the members of the Council of Action carried on such a virulent propaganda and incited the workers to such an extent that it was feared that the strike on the 7th of November would result in widespread disturbances all over the Province. Necessary precautions had been taken on the strike day. In Bombay, the Communists, finding their strike unsuccessful, started intimidating workers attending the mills, and throwing stones on mills which were working. The strike ultimately assumed the shape of open battles between the workers attending the mills and the strikers. At various places the police had to open fire in their own defence and in defence of the workers attending the mills. Munshiji who along with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was touring in the labour area was himself attacked while in his car; both the Sardar and he remained unhurt; the rear glass window of the car however was damaged by the hurling of a lathi by a striker.

As was to be expected there was violent criticism by Leftist Congressmen of the police firing, and Munshiji did not hesitate to appoint a committee of inquiry forthwith consisting of the Hon. Mr. Justice (now Sir) H. J. Kania as Chairman and Messrs. V. F. Taraporevala and M. C. Chagla (now the Hon. Mr. Justice) as members. The Committee was requested to inquire into and report on:

(*a*) the origin, causes, nature and extent of the disturbances which took place in the City of Bombay as a result of the Strike on the 7th November 1938.

(*b*) whether the precautionary measures and the action taken by the authorities before and during the strike were adequate and justified.

(*c*) such other matters as may be germane to the above.

The statement presented by Government to the Committee was in its final form prepared by Munshiji himself. The state-

ment which ran to nearly 139 pages surveyed the Communist activities in the country since the Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy case in 1924. It referred to the spread of Communist activities all over the country, their mode of organisation and working in Bombay; the 1929 disturbances in Bombay which the Percival Committee held was caused by the activities of the Red Flag Union; and the Meerut Conspiracy Case in which the Allahabad High Court held "that a Communist Party in India was formed and existed in British India; that this party was closely connected with the Communist International and that membership of the party was confined to persons who subscribed to the programme laid down by the Communist International; that the members of the party in India had undoubtedly formed a revolutionary party with the professed object of overthrowing the present order of society and bringing about the complete independence of India by means of armed uprisings of the proletariat and that this was not a distant but an immediate object."

The aims and methods of Communism were set out as under:

> "The Communists aim at the overthrow of the existing social organisation and the State by a violent revolution. They aim at the destruction of the capitalistic system of production and the consequent political, social and legal relations and the institutions arising therefrom, and at establishing the supremacy of the workers and the peasants. What principally distinguished the Communist from the Socialist is the unwavering advocacy of violent revolution. The Communists believe and preach that their aims cannot be achieved except by violence and they consider a violent revolution inevitable. They believed in and preach a dictatorship of the proletariat, as an inevitable transitional measure. According to them there is an irreconcilable antagonism between the capitalists and workers. They therefore work to make the workers and peasant class conscious and try to create and increase class antagonism. Their technique aims at acquiring control over the workers and peasants with a view to final seizure of political power."

The statement further summarised the activities of the Communist party since the formation of the Congress government in Bombay, the strikes that they had organised since; the

decision of the B.P.T.U.C. to observe a day's general strike and the appointment of a council of action, immediately followed by a virulent propaganda by the leading Communists attacking the Congress Ministry for bringing forward the Industrial Trade Disputes Bill which was termed by them as "the black bill". All the speeches of the Communist leaders were set out *in extenso*; the happenings on the 17th of November 1938 were detailed.

The Committee after enquiry submitted its report on the 25th of January 1939, and held that the origin of the disturbances was to be traced to the continuation of the Communist Party as represented by the B.P.T.U.C. and Dr. Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party on an anti-Congress platform and on account of the incitement by the leaders of these parties to violence to make the strike successful.

As regards the causes, it was clear, held the committee, that the disturbances started only when the leaders and strikers realised that the strike was a failure and that all their preparations and intensive propaganda to make the strike successful had proved futile. As the strikers had been told to make the strike successful by any and every means at their disposal, when peaceful methods failed, violence was naturally resorted to. Stone-throwing at mills after 8 a.m. was intended to terrorise the workers who had gone in and to coerce them to come out. The assaults and stone-throwing on workers who went out for their midday meal were clearly with the intention of striking terror in the minds of those who went out and preventing their return. Assaults on the workers who were returning from work in the evening, and especially on those who had returned to the mill chawls after the day's work, were sheer acts of revenge.

In a statement to the Associated Press on 4th November 1938 Munshiji had already enunciated the Government policy and while granting full freedom of demonstrations warned the organisers of the strike against intimidating:

> "If the object of the proposed demonstration is to show the strength of Labour opinion against this measure, in a peaceful manner, no exception can possibly be taken. The

> Congress Government has allowed and will continue to allow the fullest latitude to any organised but peaceful and disciplined demonstration, however hostile it may be. But at the same time the Government is bound to see that those who do not wish to participate in the demonstration and desire to attend to their normal work are given due protection against coercion or intimidation.
>
> "Reports, however, are being received that organised efforts are going to be made on November 7 to forcibly prevent workers desiring to go to work from doing so. I would, therefore, appeal to the leaders responsible for organising this demonstration to take effective measures to ensure that their followers conduct themselves peacefully and within the law."

The Committee after considering the policy of Government as contained in Munshiji's above statement to the Press and the other evidence on the point of precautionary measures held that they were satisfied that consistently with the policy of Government, the authorities took such precautionary measures to meet the situation as could be reasonably foreseen by them.

After going through the facts with regard to each of the various firings resorted to by the Police in self-defence and in defence of workers desiring to go to work, the Committee held that they were all justified. Thus Munshiji's attempts to preserve law and order were not only efficacious but fully vindicated by all canons of justice.

Lord Acton once said that "the finest opportunity ever given to the world was thrown away because the passion for equality made vain the hope for freedom". Somewhat similar was the situation created by the Communists' passion for strikes as an invinsible and ever rightful weapon to be utilised against the employers in their fight for economic concessions and political power. These incessant strikes organised by a party bent upon discrediting the Congress regime and creating the worst possible chaos on the economic front certainly crossed the bounds of law when they threatened the equally strong right of others to go to work and earn. They constituted a challenge to the very conception of law and order, and besides

defending the State and society from violence and intimidation, Munshiji in the closest association with and under the guidance of Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, the greatest labour expert in the country, and now the Minister of Labour in the Bombay Ministry, had only sought, by the Industrial Relations Bill, to give a legislative form to the right of society to have industrial peace and the duty of the State to enforce that right with all possible speed whenever a dislocation threatened. Are we to have unfettered right to strike for labour or to lock-out for capital, or are we to have production, uninterrupted as far as possible, in the interests of the larger masses steeped in poverty?

Speaking on the Industrial Relations Bill Munshiji explained that central issue in the Bombay Assembly:

> "The Bill proposes to do three things. It, first of all, provides legislative machinery for developing the strength of unions. I will point out how we fulfil that claim. Secondly, it provides a legal machinery for conciliation, arbitration and adjudication of industrial disputes, and, thirdly, renders illegal all strikes and lock-outs which are not *bona fide*. These are the three prime objects of the Bill, But the argument is "Oh, what right has the State to interfere in this?" Why should the Community interfere in this?" Well, Sir, I should have thought that it was the fundamental creed of a socialist that the State must intervene in all industrial disputes between labour and capital. This is the first time that an argument of this kind has been advanced by any one who claims to be a socialist, much less a communist.
>
> *Mr. S. V. Parulekar*: The State, as at present constituted, is the workers' enemy!
>
> *The Hon'ble Mr. K. M. Munshi*: I will only refer to the authors to whom my honourable friend has himself referred. Says Cole, the favourite author of my honourable friend:
>
> > "It is an essential part of the Socialist case that this power,........"
>
> That is, the power of control over the relations between capital and labour,
>
> > "in the days of modern large-scale business, is too great to be left in the hands of any private persons or group. This power, says the Socialist, is too great to

> be irresponsibly exercised. It cannot rightly be left in the hands of any authority less than the whole community".—(*An Outline of Modern Knowledge*, p. 686).

And today, the Legislature, Sir, represents the whole community. Similar is the view of his other gospel, which he read out to this House more than once; that is, Sidney Webb on Industrial Democracy. The history of Socialism began by a circular as old as 1871, from which most of the socialistic ideas in England grew; and this is the principle which has always been accepted by socialists and communists all over the world. This is what the circular says:

> "It is a sound principle of universal law established by the wisdom of more than two thousand years that where in the necessary imperfections of human affairs the parties to a contract or dealing do not stand on as equal footing, but one has an undue power to oppress or mislead the other, law should step in to succour the weaker party."—(*Industrial Democracy*, by Sidney Webb, p. 251).

My honourable friend Mr. Karandikar was quite wrong when he said, in reply to my honourable friend Mr. S. K. Patil, that this Bill had been brought in the interest of capitalists. This bill has been brought in solely with the object first, of safeguarding the interests of the workers, by creating unions which will be able to discharge their duty better and more effectively, and, secondly, in the interest of the community, which cannot permit a wrangle between capital and labour to grow into an unrest affecting the whole body politic. Therefore, this is not brought in the interests of capitalists: it is brought in the interests of the weaker party, which, we know and realise, is the worker, who is famished, who has got no reserve, who is ignorant, and who is misled. Therefore, this bill has been brought, I again repeat, in the interests of the weaker party; and the State must, I submit, intervene in this matter, even according to the gospel of some of the honourable gentlemen sitting on the other side...... When the right to strike is abused by a section to the loss and inconvenience of the community, the state's duty was clear.

If we are to grow in stature as a nation, the logic of coercion must be replaced by the logic of law. Suppose there is a small and compact body of energetic men whose business it is to fish for grievances irrespective of economic

gain to workers; suppose they have mastered the technique of strike-mongering and created a press and platform, and a force which can shout or threaten or coerce unwilling workers to a scheduled programme by violence; suppose they utilise their forces to coerce workers by force or threats, factory owners by loss of business and authorities by insistent propaganda; suppose such men made it their business to conduct lightning strikes—would strikes made by them be in the exercise of the right of free association or of freedom? Coercion, I repeat, is the very negation of freedom.

In addition, suppose these men have a doctrine based on violence, involving programmes to destroy property, to subvert the prevailing structures of society; if the strikes are intended to utilise economic evils for violent revolutionary ends—would the strikes be legitimate? Would there be any right of association or of freedom of contract underlying such activities? To admit an unlimited right to strike under such circumstances, to admit the right of such men to use labour for subversive purposes is to endanger all civilised life and make violence the law of life.

Such a right is naked force. The only way is then for the community to make legislation whereby the right to strike is restricted to its natural economic bounds. And this the Bill proposes to do.

Therefore, Sir, if the right to strike is affected by this Bill, it is only affected in the eyes of men of this class. If the right to strike is sought to be exercised in that way, I say it is the duty of the community to stand between the two warring factions, capital and labour.

If the law of the jungle is sought to be introduced in this country or any other, it is the bounden duty of the community to step in and say "You shall not do this".

Neither employers nor employees, as only two units of society, have any 'divine' right to wilfully hamper the work of production or hold the community to ransom by their internal disputes. Munshiji's assertion that the State must not only defend but promote the interests of the larger community may not have been relished by their labour or capital, but the efforts of Shri Nanda and Munshiji have laid a sound basis for the country's economic peace and progress—a basis widely recognised as sound by thinkers in England and America.

RETURN OF FORFEITED LANDS

The Congress Ministry was pledged to the return of the lands forfeited during the civil disobedience movements for non-payment of agricultural assessment. On forfeiture these had been auctioned off and purchased for almost nothing.

When the proposal was taken on hand immediately after assumption of office it was urged with vehemence that the policy of compensating people who had suffered financially on account of pursuing a political policy from the public purse when that party was in power, would have dangerous repurcussions on the finances of the province. Such a policy was without precedent. Gandhiji was of the opinion that on grounds of equity people who acquired land at a nominal price to suit the repressive action of British Government had no right to retain it after the exigency was over and that Government was pledged to restore the lands. The administrative efforts of the Congress Ministry to restore those lands were infructuous and it fell to Munshiji to get them restored to the original owners by undertaking legislation on the lines indicated by Gandhiji.

The clauses with regard to compensation to the holders of the land was the one much debated upon in and outside the legislature. The following letter of Shri Mahadeo Desai to Shri Munshiji in this connection would be read with interest:

> "I wonder if you ever read the *Indian Social Reformer*. There is in the issue of July 9, a stupid and most mischievous note on the lands question. The writer calls the contemplated legislation 'confiscatory'. In view of this and other criticisms Bapu and I think that a preamble indicating the purpose of the legislation is absolutely essential. You must make it clear to the world that the old transactions were fraudulent and that the wrong must be righted. It is no use the Governor insisting on the omission of this preamble. In think Bapu's draft makes all these abundantly clear. But I thought I must pass this on to you, lest there should be any mistake."

The preamble of the bill as introduced in the Legislature was as under:

"Whereas certain lands were forfeited as a result of the Civil Disobedience Movement for the non-payment of land revenue and other sums due to Government; and whereas the said lands were disposed of to certain persons for inadequate consideration; and whereas it is just and expedient to acquire them with a view to restore them to the original holders thereof; it is hereby enacted as follows."

Compensation under the Bill to the purchasers from Government was fixed at the amount paid by them; the amount of expenditure incurred by them in making improvements to the lands, the land revenue paid by them since their acquisition; interest at 4 per cent on the total of the three previous items; plus 15 per cent of the foregoing. In the case of those holders who had purchased the lands in good faith from those who had purchased from Government the compensation was the price paid; cost of improvement plus 15 per cent of the total of both.

The return of the confiscated lands was a cardinal issue on which Congress had pledged itself to the electorate. It was Munshiji's tact and firmness that ultimately secured justice.

PROHIBITION

Congress had been pledged to Prohibition and soon after assumption of office in 1937 the Working Committee passed a resolution to the effect that the Congress governed provinces should introduce complete prohibition within a period of three years. Dr. M. D. D. Gilder, the Minister in charge, had been for many years the ardent champion of Prohibition, and he inaugurated the campaign with thoroughness.

After introducing Prohibition in some mofussil areas, the Bombay Government announced their decision to introduce total prohibition in the City of Bombay as from the 1st of August 1939, and two dry days in a month for the three industrial centres of Sholapur, Hubli and Dhulia.

A most important question was about the machinery which was to enforce Prohibition. Munshiji's stand was that an independent Excise Force was not the appropriate machinery and that Prohibition can succeed only if drink, like any other crime,

was made an offence which the ordinary police force was bound to deal with like ordinary offences. After a protracted struggle Munshiji gained his point, and, thereafter, he came to be closely associated with Dr. Gilder in introducing prohibition.

The liquor trade in Bombay was mainly in the hands of Parsis, and as soon as the Prohibition policy of Government was announced they became restive. But when the announcement of complete Prohibition in the city was made, they with the help of those opposed to the Congress government, started a movement to foil the introduction of prohibition in the province. The crusader in Munshiji readily took up the challenge and shouldered alone the responsibility for carrying on propaganda in favour of Prohibition, explaining the policy of Government and pointing out the fallacy in the anti-prohibitionist stand. From the month of May till the 1st of August there was not a week in which Munshiji did not address a mammoth meeting; there was not a day on which he did not do something to organise the prohibition propaganda.

At a meeting addressed at the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall on the 9th May 1939 Shri Munshiji thus put the case for prohibition:

> Drink is not a necessity nor nourishment. It is at best a luxury. Alcoholism has destroyed the best bodies and the finest brains in the world. On the contrary no one ever died of having given up drink, nor did any one feel sorry for having done so. Drink is the source of inefficiency and crime.
>
> Indian sentiment since ages has looked upon it as a vice and crime, and in fighting it we are fighting for a clean life.
>
> But there are some friends who try to warn us against Prohibition by quoting America's failure. The case of America is not on all fours with India's. It did not possess our tradition, our habits or our sentiment in this matter. And even if we have to face some of the difficulties which America had to face, we shall cheerfully do so. It is better to fight gangsterdom than to see our manhood destroyed by the corrosive influence of alcohol.

The manner in which Munshiji carried through this meeting showed the extreme patience with which he carried on the

entire Prohibition propaganda inspite of provocations, occasionally of the worst type. The C. J. Hall had almost been captured by the anti-prohibitionists and the platform was strewn with missiles and rotten eggs. At every stage of the meeting the crowd bent upon mischief, raised all sorts of slogans against Prohibition and the Ministry. With all these provocations Munshiji carried the meeting through—though it took about seven hours—delivered his speech and showed to the anti-Prohibitionists the grim determination with which he was going ahead with his plans.

On the economic advantage of Prohibition Munshiji said at the same meeting:

> "On any easy estimate, when prohibition is introduced the purchasing power of Bombay will increase by three crores per year. This money will circulate among the community and provide comforts to those who do not have them today. And yet we are told that 35,000 landlords in Bombay receiving a return of one per cent less on their investments will bring down our economic structure."

Munshiji's exhortation ended like a war cry in a note of determination and enthusiasm which no wonder proved infectious.

> "The whole City and Salsette is mobilising for 1st August. Let us not waver. Let every Association organise its Prohibition Committee. Let every volunteer corps and *akhada* become an associate agency. Let every man and woman do his or her bit. And in spite of doubts and threats and evil auguries we shall make Bombay the first City in the East not merely in trade and commerce, but in morals as well. It is a holy war, and the victory is ours."

His reply to a Parsi friend (published elsewhere in this volume) which was widely published, was an exhaustive one dealing with certain queries "troubling the ordinary Parsi." Some of the critics found in the failure of the American experiment in Prohibition sufficient reason for pessimism or perverse propaganda. Replying to the criticisms that the experiment in Bombay too was bound to fail likewise, Munshiji

speaking at Blavatsky Lodge on the 20th of June 1939 emphasised the differences of the situation which were in India's favour:

> "My answer to those who quote the example of America is that the enforcing machinery in India will be controlled by persons who would regard drink as a sin and crime. What chances would a boot-legger have if the officers used the provisions of law that are available? With us it is not merely an economic or moral question. It is a question of deep religious and cultural significance. We want to be true to our Indian culture which has always forsworn drink and that is why we will succeed where America failed."

Munshiji's speeches in the City covered every aspect of the reform and left no scope for the anti-Prohibitionist propaganda.

The weekly bulletin published by the Prohibition Propaganda Board, the posters depicting the evil of drink displayed prominently all over the City, and other prohibition literature published by the Prohibition Propaganda Board showed the determination with which the Government was approaching the introduction of prohibition in the City. The mammoth procession of the citizens of Bombay to the Azad Maidan and the mammoth meeting held there on August 1, 1939 were indications of the popular desire in the City for the introduction of Prohibition.

Besides propaganda, the effective enforcement of the Prohibition in the City also engaged his attention long before the date fixed for its introduction. The creation of a separate branch in the Police force in the City for enforcement was completed long before the date, and all those who had been in the Excise Department and who could be absorbed in the new branch of the police force were so absorbed. In the result Munshiji, as the head of the Home Department, within the very short time at his disposal succeeded in enforcing the prohibition scheme in the City of Bombay to the consternation of his powerful opponents.

HORSE BREEDING IN INDIA

Nothing escaped the vigilant eye of Munshiji. He raised and permanently settled even the question of the Turf Club and the breeding of Indian horses. The Western India Turf Club is a public Company for making profit out of horse-racing and betting. By virtue of clause 6 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, only a limited number of club and stand members are entitled to divide between them all the profits derived from the security given by the Government in the shape of monopoly. The Government was not justified, said Munshiji, in giving a monopoly except on public grounds. Among those public grounds, he gave the first place to the raising of an Indian breed of horses, for it was clearly wrong that a large amount of purchase money should be sent out every year to foreign countries to buy foreign breeds of horses. The Club members and horse breeders were aghast at Munshiji's proposals, for they felt that the reputation of the Western India Turf Club would go down if it had to work under the limitations sought to be imposed by the Home Minister; but the wisdom of Munshiji's action has already been proved by the improved breed of Indian horses and the increasing number of Indian gentlemen among the Club and Stand members of the Western India Turf Club.

On the 17th of December, 1937, Munshiji gave an interview to the Stewards of the Royal Western India Turf Club. He stated to them that, the following considerations would weigh with Government before it granted a further licence to the Turf Club:

The R.W.I.T.C. was a public company which made profit out of the gambling propensities of the public by reason of the monopoly that has been granted by Government; the members of the Club had invested very little money of their own and their liability on winding up was one rupee only; and such monopoly could not be allowed to exist in the interests of the club member or against the interests of the public.

The representatives of the Club were therefore requested to consider the following:

(*a*) that at least 55 per cent of the membership should be Indian;

(*b*) that a substantial part of the money recovered by the Company or spent on horse racing in connection with this company should be spent in India:

(*c*) that the Company should pay a licence fee calculated on the average net annual profits of the Company; (such profits to be calculated on the basis of expenses reasonably incurred and a reasonable amount for depreciation).

(*d*) that a scheme should be placed before Government by which within a reasonable time import of foreign horses and employment of foreign jockeys could be reduced.

As a result of the negotiations between the Turf Club and Government various reforms were introduced in the Turf Cub, the prominent one being its Indianisation.

Mr. Fali Wadia, Vice-President of the National Horse Breeders and Show Society of India, thus writes on Munshiji's contribution to horse breeding in India.

That horses were bred in India in the earliest days, seems beyond doubt. The Maurya Army of Chandra Gupta could boast of 80,000 cavalry and several thousands of horse drawn chariots. While some of the horses may have been imported from neighbouring countries, it is certain that a large number was bred in India. Unfortunately however the breeding was carried on in a haphazard fashion, and while in some parts of the country, a hardy type of small horse was produced, by and large the average production was of poor quality.

A vast amount of research would be required to trace the history of the horse in India from the earliest times onwards, but for our purpose it will be sufficient to consider the subject from the early days of British Rule. The extension of British power in India created a growing need for horses for military use. Many years of internal warfare had depleted the country of good horses and outside sources of supply then hardly existed. It was imperative somehow to obtain an adequate supply of horses, and the Government was compelled to turn to breeding.

Thus it was that Government Stud Farms were established and by the middle of the 19th Century there existed a fully developed scheme for the production of horses for the

Army. This scheme was not designed for the benefit of the country. There was only one specific purpose for which it was set up, i.e., to supply the needs of the Army. It is true that private individuals were at the same time subsidised, by grants of lands etc, but here again the main object was to help production for Army use. In short, horse-breeding was a Government concern—run solely to supply military needs. There was no endeavour to make the Industry a National one for the general benefit and welfare of the country or to make India a horse-breeding country as a whole. In 1875 a move was made to stimulate private enterprise, but as there existed no profitable market and as Government made no effort to provide one, there was no incentive to establish a private Industry.

Had the Government set up or fostered the setting up of Racing Centres, the required incentive would have been provided, and a profitable market created, but nothing was done and Remount Depots under Army Control reverted to breeding horses for their own purposes.

The next landmark was the establishment by private enterprise (mainly European) of Turf Clubs in India.

It may be asked—"What has Racing to do with Breeding?" The answer is "Everything". The one cannot exist without the other. Some people regard Racing as a means for gambling, others regard it at best as a sport. It is in reality, very much more than that. It is the only test and an absolutely essential test for the horses we breed. The Race Course alone and nothing else can enable us to ascertain which are the best animals to breed from, and *it is the Race Course alone through which we can develop the hardiness, stamina, speed, and powers of endurance of our horses.* Finally, the Race Course provides the only profitable market for the Breeding Industry. Though there may be some justification for Horse Racing as a sport *per se,* the real justification for its existence is that it is the main artery of the Breeding Industry and that without the Race Course, the Breeding Industry could not exist, leave alone flourish.

The establishment of Turf Clubs in India, therefore, opened up vast possibilities for Indian Breeders. It was a golden opportunity for the promoters of those Clubs to do something for the country they lived in and prospered by. They could easily have brought about conditions providing an incentive to Indian Breeders; they could have laid the foundations of the Indian Horse Breeding Industry

and made it flourish. It has unfortunately to be recorded that they did nothing of the kind. The vested interests were not Indian, not National minded and instead of creating a market for the Indian horse, they provided a market for foreign horses. Racing was mainly, if not entirely, confined to Arab, English, Australian and other imported horses. Lakhs of Rupees left India annually for purchases of Race horses from overseas. Had the Race Club executives instead framed Races for Indian horses, the indigenous Industry would have sprung up much earlier, Indian money would have been spent mostly in India and we would have acquired a new National asset. A few voices in the wilderness, raised the demand for Indianisation, but they were ignored by the Turf Club executives.

Not till the advent of the first Congress Government in Bombay was this disastrous situation rectified. The licence of the Royal Western India Turf Club Ltd., went before Sjt. K. M. Munshi as Home Member, for renewal. The Club executive, then dominated by non-Indians, attempted to resist Munshiji's scheme, but with characteristic vigour and firmness, he made it clear that unless the Turf was Indianised, it would not be allowed to continue. He demanded among other things the reservation of Races for Indian Breds and the allocation to them of 45 per cent of the Total Stake Money within five years. This factor alone was responsible for the immediate setting up of the existing Horse Breeding Industry in Western India—an Industry which in time to come will be of considerable benefit to the country as a whole. Immense possibilities exist of developing schemes for the introduction of the horse into the agricultural economy of our country nor must the importance of the horse be overlooked for defence and internal security purposes, in spite of modern mechanisation. Munshiji realised that racing was not to be considered in itself, only as a sport or as a business, but as a prime necessity for the establishment of an indigenous Horse Breeding Industry. It is to his vision and his broad-minded approach that we owe the creation and existence of such an Industry today.

If this new Industry is fostered and allowed to grow, in time to come the home-bred Horse will find his rightful place to bear the country's economy and the seed sown by Munshiji will then bear its full fruit.

TEMPLE ENTRY AND OTHER REFORMS

Bombay was the first province to pass a Bill for the Removal of Disabilities of Harijans in regard to worship in temples. By clause 3 of the Harijan Temple Entry Bill passed on 1st February 1938 the trustee or majority of trustees of a temple were empowered to make a declaration that such temple should be open to the Harijans notwithstanding anything contained in the terms of instrument of trust, the terms of dedication or a decree or order of a competent court relating to such temple or custom, usage or law.

Munshiji was in charge of piloting the Bill through the Assembly and while moving the first reading of the Bill in the Assembly he traced the history of the movement since 1920 when the Indian National Congress put the removal of untouchability as a part of its programme. After referring to Gandhiji's 'Fast unto death' in 1932 which resulted in the Yeravada Pact and the movement among the Hindus thereafter in favour of eradication of untouchability, he mentioned how in the course of the movement legal difficulties came in the way of the temples being thrown open to the Harijans.'

While referring to the attitude of the Sanatanists to the question of the opening of temples to Harijans, Shri Munshiji spoke passionately for justice to the Untouchables, scripture or no scripture:

> "The other class is of the extreme Sanatanist, whose notions of Hinduism are so wonderful that he will not and cannot be reconciled to the opening of the temples to the Harijans. He believes that his Hinduism is an arrogant creed which bases its existence on the superiority of one caste over another. His faith is in social inequality. He believes in hereditary social injustice to be perpetuated not only outside, but even inside temples. He feels that his god is so brittle that if a Harijan came and looked at it, its godliness would break. Sir, it is a very unfortunate mentality, though I am very glad to say that it is restricted to a very few."

His own profound understanding of Hinduism came to his aid in fighting those who would misinterpret the scriptures in such a way as to destroy its well known catholicity.

"It (Hinduism) is a world culture which knows no racial arrogance, no social inequality. The social structure of Hindu India is entirely different from the spirit of Hinduism and we do hope that Hinduism will be purged of its greatest disgrace of which really we feel ashamed. If I may go a little further, I would say—I am only confessing my personal view—that if the *Shastras* are such as they preach—they do not as a matter of fact do so—social inequality for generation after generation, those *Shastras* deserve to be consigned to flames. It will be no religion—it will be no Hinduism—we would be untrue to the Nation and to the whole spirit of Hinduism if we allowed such notions of social inequality to be perpetuated in times like this."

Sabbath was made for man, not man for Sabbath, taught Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees who came to denounce him for non-observance of the Sabbath. It was the spirit of that teaching that seem to have inspired this crusader against untouchability when he unhesitatingly said that even Scriptures must go to the flames if they were the sanction behind man's inhumanity to men.

INTERSTATAL ADMINISTRATIVE RELATIONS

During his regime as Home Minister a difficult situation arose in the neighbouring State of Hyderabad, where an agitation was started by Arya Samajists and Hindu Mahasabha against the anti-Hindu policy of the Nizam's Government. This gave Munshiji the opportunity of stating in the most specific terms the policy of a Provincial Government in regard to political movements in Indian States. In a couple of interviews with the Nizam's representative he made the position clear:

(1) The Bombay Government would help Hyderabad where a newspaper champions the overthrow of the Nizam or his dynasty or where it seeks to create intercommunal discord likely to result in violence between communities in the Province. Under this principle *Vaidik Sandesh,* was warned when it attacked the Muslim faith.

(2) The Government will give to the press the same liberty of criticising Hyderabad which it enjoys as regards the criticism of Bombay Government itself.

(3) Incitement of or preparation for violence in any shape or form would be taken notice of and dealt with. Action was taken against *Garjana* under the Press Act when incitement to violence was urged against the Maharaja of Gondal.

(4) Bombay Government would give to the Nizams' Government all information as may be required and which a friendly State would be bound to give. It will not stop men proceeding to Hyderabad territory with an intention, which if carried out, may amount to a breach of its law there.

At the same time he stated that the Bombay Government were not prepared to pull Hyderabad's chestnuts out of the fire by taking executive action dealing with the political agitation against that State, or even by converting itself into an agency for scrutinising newspapers etc., on behalf of any Indian State.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICS

As regards the political activities of teachers and students in schools, Munshiji boldly departed from the earlier Government's policy and notified that "pupils and schoolmasters are free to attend all public meetings at which ideas involving class hatred or organised or unorganised violence are not directly or indirectly disseminated; that they are free to become members of organisations other than those whose policy or programme involve the dissemination of class hatred and violence or the use of violence immediately; that they may take part in the activities of all educational, social and religious associations so long as they do not join in any strike or protracted demonstration, which would interfere with the studies; but that students may not become members of the Committees of any political organisation or organisations having communal antagonism as their aim or take an active part in furthering its activities."

The head of the institution was declared to be the final judge of whether a meeting, organisation or any activity falls under one or the other of the aforesaid heads.

In accordance with the conception of a modern State's duty towards its citizen's primary education was recognised by Munshiji as the first charge on the State's revenues. For the

same reason he thought, it could not be permitted to continue under the control of a multitude of small agencies.

While participating in the debate on a resolution of Government on primary education in the Province on the 19th September 1937 Munshiji outlined a new conception of educational activity.

> "At the present moment, the unit of educational activity is an approved school and that in my opinion is not the proper way in which this question should be tackled. The unit should really be the teacher. We need not be very emphatic at the present moment about an approved school. An approved building, about absolutely well-trained teachers, a fine compound, provision for games, and the rest of it. If we are able to have teachers who could go, sit down anywhere and start education we would have achieved our purpose in a much shorter time than under the present scheme."

He deprecated the habit of laying down "absolutely prohibitive standards" and then complaining that education is not spreading, and recommended a method more familiar with the Indian mind than the English method which requires every kind of equipment before starting a school. Such a method would include the utilisation of the services of the volunteers in their hundreds and thousands who would be ready to hold part time schools merely as a matter of service, and of the many wealthy people who would be very willing to assist Government in organising primary schools in their taluka or district.

On the vexed question of the *lingua frqnca,* he 'admired' the efforts to have Hindi as the *lingua franca* of India, but pleaded for a sense of proportion in the matter of its introduction. He said:

> "The *lingua franca* is not expected to be a substitute for the mother tongue (hear, hear) Hindustani or Hindi is to be the medium for the whole country but it is to be a second language in my opinion, and it is only through the medium of the mother tongue that you can give primary education so as to evoke the best in a student."

SEPARATION OF JUDICIARY AND THE EXECUTIVE

The Congress was pledged to the separation of the Judiciary from the executive, and Munshiji took the opportunity of a visit to the District Court at Poona on the 20th of October 1937 to give expression to his belief in the separations of the executive and judicial functions. He had been studying the question of bringing that principle into the field of practical politics, even in a limited sphere, but admitted, it was a difficult task involving heavy expenditure.

For a province like Bombay, he held, this purpose would only be achieved if the judges had the responsibility of dispensing criminal law, and if the lawyers who attained eminence voluntarily gave up their practice to take up honorary magistracies. As soon as this scheme became practicable it would be his duty to appeal to the legal profession in the Presidency to help in the cause of the separation of the two functions. On this depended the successful establishment of the reign of law in criminal matters.

The premature resignation of the Congress Ministries prevented any action being taken on this point.

GREATER BOMBAY

Munshiji brought the question of Greater Bombay to a successful issue. The question had been pending decision for a number of years.

To him, there appeared several reasons which make the need for a greater Bombay imperative. As he later pointed out in the *Social Welfare,* when the scheme was again taken up by the Bombay Government, if the idea was to succeed it would be desirable to completely absorb the additional area for all purposes of administration, including revenue, police, judicial and civil administration. He could forsee that the Bombay Municipality would grumble at the suggestion, but he was confident in his mind that such attitude on the part of the municipality would be short-sighted, for what it spends now would be repaid several times by the growth of the City in a few years' time.

The Released Prisoners and the delinquent children did not escape the attention of Munshiji.

Presiding over the Annual Meeting of the Bombay Presidency Released Prisoners Aid Society held on Tuesday 12th April, 1938 Munshiji brought to bear a scientific outlook on the problem of crime.

"There is yet a large section of the public", he said, "whose attitude towards crime and criminals is of a medieval kind. They believe in the old world notions that once a crime is committed the criminal, as in hell, must be boiled alive for the rest of his life.

The economics of after-care was clear.

> "But, the moral snobbery of our generation is being forgotten. It is being increasingly realised that a convict, after he is released, is more sinned against than sinning. Habitual criminals are made because when they leave the jail they have no decent place to go to; and in many cases only a life of vice or crime is open to them. If this fact is properly realised it would be clear that every man, who is saved from going back to jail by after-care remains to become an asset to society, and every rupee spent on such after-care is economy from the point of view both of Government and Society."

In order to solve the problem of the destitute and begging children, Munshiji organised a scheme, which aimed at the establishment of village homes for children where children could be trained to be village workers. In this scheme the numerous city institutions for helping destitute and begging children would serve only as exchanges for collecting and distributing such children to the centres established by the Children's Aid Society. Munshiji also inspired a scheme for creating a home for mentally defective children. But these activities, dealing with social reclamation, are described in detail in a later section.

"Mr. W. W. Russell, then member of the European Group in the Legislative Assembly, writes about the time when Munshiji was Home Minister:

> Many Europeans were of the opinion at that time that their members in the Assembly would find themselves automatically in opposition to the Congress Government on every issue, but it soon became evident—at any rate to all of us European members—that far from being in opposition

more often than not we agreed with the policy of Government and that the ministry on their part were anxious for our support, despite the fact that they possessed a comfortable majority in the House.

I think one of the most potent factors in bringing about this somewhat unexpected situation was the personality and character of Shri. K. M. Munshi. I have spoken with many Englishmen who have lived in the Bombay Presidency far longer than I have, all of whom are of the opinion that Bombay has never been served by such a strong and capable Home Member as Shri. Munshi proved himself to be from 1937 to 1939. What particularly stands out in my memory of those early legislative days is the clarity of his speech and the economy of his words—whether he was speaking on Land Tenure, Education, or Industrial Disputes, his grasp of the subject was profound and his exposition was as clear as the water in a Pacific lagoon.

Apart from Shri Munshi's outstanding ability as Parliamentarian and Administrator, I also recall many delightful informal encounters with him in the lobby and the Committee Rooms. Perhaps a quotation from the diary dated the 15th September 1938, when the Bombay Trade Disputes Bill was passing through the various stages of legislation will indicate the impression he made on one Englishman at that time:

> "The Trade Disputes Bill continued and Dr. Ambedkar delivered a pompous talk extolling the workers' divine right to strike. We had some interesting lobby work and I managed after some negotiations with Nagindas Master, the Premier and Munshi to fix up a meeting in one of the Committee Rooms between Munshi, Stones, Cooke and Saklatwala to discuss our own amendments, in view of there being no Select Committee. From our point of view this was vastly more satisfactory and we made progress, Munshi agreeing to accept a number of our points and giving satisfactory assurances on others. His mind moves like lightning, so fast in fact that he can hardly be bothered to speak consecutively; he stops a sentence in the middle and carries on about something else, as if his mind had got to the end ages before his lips, which makes things rather difficult for his listeners."

I have met many of the leading statesmen and politicians of India during my ten years in this remarkable and

romantic country, but I can say with all sincerity that Shri. Munshi has by far the clearest brain of all of those that I have met; furthermore, he understands the vital necessity of preserving law and order during these anxious days of transition from Foreign Government to National Independence. It is one thing to have good ideas and a good brain. It is quite another to have the strength of character to put your ideas into practice especially if by doing so you are courting unpopularity. Shri. Munshi has convictions and the courage to put them into practice. He is without a doubt a Leader.

X

THE NATION'S SENTINEL

With the commencement of the long foreseen World War II in September 1939, a rupture between the Congress and the British Government looked inevitable, though to a handful of Congressmen like Munshiji such a rupture was not only unnecessary but also undesirable. It was felt by them that Britain did not really want to break with Congress if its co-operation in war was assured. And the elements within the Congress who were looking forward impatiently to Britain's difficulty as India's opportunity, found in Lord Linlithgow's tactless declaration of India into war against Axis without as much as even a consultation with the popular leaders, the occasion for precipitating the 'last struggle' against British Imperialism.

But Gandhiji, as a Satyagrahi, yearned for peace and refused to take advantage of Britain's difficulty. He wanted India to help Britain and democracy against Nazism if only she could do so as a free Nation. After the experience of working the Government of India Act in the provincial sphere Munshiji had come to realise the benefits which it provided as a centralising force against the prevailing centrifugal tendencies. He found Lord Linlithgow anxious to work in continual co-operation with the Congress to bring in a new era with the Federal part of the Act in operation. In the course of a talk with Munshiji in 1939 Lord Linlithgow said:

> "Sec. 93 is a nightmare. You cannot get away from me, and I cannot get away from you. The circumstances daily arising in India and the world render that impossible".

Munshiji was among the few who keenly felt at this juncture the need for preserving the unity of the country and therefore of a strong governmental power at the centre for dissolving the Hindu-Muslim antagonism by means of its coercive influences.

In these circumstances he was naturally anxious to explore the possibilities of continuing the peaceful co-operation established between Indian nationalism and Britain. His personal friendship and influence with the Bombay Governor, Sir Roger Lumley stood him in good stead in that task. From Gandhiji he got the following message comprising his terms, which were promptly conveyed to the highest quarters:

> 1. I know that my views in regard to unconditional co-operation are not shared by the Country. The resolution of the Working Committee reflects the Congress opinion properly.
>
> 2. Since the Congress is unable, owing to past experiences, to give unconditional co-operation, it can only operate if it is able to convince the country that it has in substance achieved its purpose and that therefore there is a complete understanding about it between the British Government and the Congress.
>
> 3. If there is a real understanding between the British Government and the Congress it follows that there must be corresponding action even during the war. Thus Ministries must not be mere registering agencies of the measures coming from the Centre. Hence there must be some method at the Centre for having a Congress representation sufficient to give it a majority.
>
> 4. The only constitutional way in which the Ministries can declare their position is to obtain the necessary authority of their respective legislatures by getting them to adopt this resolution, unless in the meantime they can convince their legislatures that circumstances in terms of 2 and 3 have come into existence which render such resolution unnecessary.
>
> 5. If the British Government are serious in their professions that they are fighting for democracy, they cannot marshall the moral opinion of the world in their favour except by declaring that India will be a free and democratic country at the end of the war and that in the meantime it

has taken steps to implement the assurance so far as it is practicable under martial conditions.

6. If for some reason the British Government takes a different view the Ministries will find it impossible to function.

7. The resolution may be kept back for a week if the members of the War Sub-Committee agree. But it must be clearly understood that before the A.I.C.C. meets the Working Committee, which meets on the 4th, must have definite material to give the lead to the A.I.C.C. and the Country.

The attempt failed, as the offer was rejected by the British Government, although the eminently reasonable nature of the stand of Gandhiji must have been obvious to any fair mind.

The Congress could not tolerate the humiliation of seeing the nation treated like a chattel in forced service of a Britain at war and decided that the provincial ministries must resign in protest. Along with his colleagues in the Cabinet Munshiji resigned in November 1939.

It was known to a few that Munshiji personally did not favour the Congress Ministries quitting office. He saw the possibility of their remaining in office and making themselves an indispensable ally of the Centre holding the organisation the Country and its resources in their hands, preparatory to gaining power at the Centre. But British suspicion of Congress intentions was as strong as the impatience of the Congressmen to go forward.

Frustrated in his constructive effort for peace Munshiji did not embrace inactivity as a solution. He founded the *Social Welfare*, an English weekly, whose first issue came out on 9-9-1940. Hardly had it run for 12 weeks when Munshiji was selected among others by Gandhiji to take part in his Individual Satyagraha campaign. On 4th December he was arrested and taken away for detention under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules. Owing to serious deterioration in health, however, he was released in the middle of March 1941. But even while taking a badly needed rest at Almrora, he expressed himself in unequivocal terms against Britain losing one by one her opportunities to gain Indian friendship. Under

the title "Lost Opportunity" he wrote on 8th May 1941 in *Social Welfare*: bewailing Britain's lost opportunity to keep India as her enthusiastic partner rather than as a subservient instrument. That was both a word of warning to Britain and advice to India.

> "Neither armed might nor cunning diplomacy helps a nation to survive. The might of Rome is no more. The craft of England has carried it no further. Survival is only for the people who believe in the moral order, who have tenacity to stand fast to their group idea, who know the art of winning life by being ready to die for it, who can immolate themselves for their ideals."

Even the friend of Indo-British understanding could see "Quit India" on the horizon. While Mr. Amery kept on harping on his pet theme of the August offer and the need for agreement among all the parties and communities in India, Munshiji saw in it all an ill-concealed determination not to transfer to Indians the reality of power at the centre either during the war or after it.

Munshiji was still in Almora when communal riots broke out and spread like wild fire in many cities like Dacca, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Cawnpore. The news of goonda elements everywhere trying to overawe the law-abiding, but worse of the law-abiding helplessly awaiting the police or running away was shocking to him in the extreme. He called it "cowardice in excelsis". But he felt more humiliated than enraged. For he could see that "cowards will always create bullies".

Writing on 22nd May in his journal he traced the source of the riots and showed the remedy:

> "Riots are not signs of political, religious or communal differences. They are outbursts of the predatory instincts of the goondas in a community. Politics, Religion or Communalism only exploits these instincts for its own purposes by creating the necessary ferment. In civilized societies, differences would be settled without parties stooping to stage blood-baths. If the law-abiding, who form a large majority in every society, resist violent attacks on life and property, the lawless will soon give up attempts to overawe by force."

In preaching the message of resistance to the goonda and all that the goonda stood for, he foresaw Noakhalis and Tipprahs as the inevitable consequence of mass cowardice.

> "Today lawlessness stalks over our fair cities and fairer villagesides. Tomorrow our shrines may be desecrated, our women dishonoured. The day after, India's territorial integrity may be threatened by gangsters seeking to dominate the world. Shall we face all these dangers by running away? At all times, is there not a duty, both legal and moral, to arrest the wrong-doer, to resist evil?"

And without contenting himself with preaching personal courage he also showed the methods of resisting the goondas by methods other than the goondas.

These riots which so often meant the loss of numerous innocent lives and more than that the degradation of society into a group of cowards at the mercy of the goondas, were giving Munshiji an occasion for very serious thought on the scope of non-violence as a principal remedy. Ever since the days of Bardoli, when he first saw the majesty of non-violence at work and more particularly since he joined the Salt Satyagraha, he had accepted the principle of non-violent resistance to the evil embodied in the machinery of an alien state. But here was non-violence apparently failing as a practical remedy against organised goondaism. Was not non-violence becoming the excuse of the coward, the opportunity for the bully and the humiliation of a whole society? "Running away from evil is a greater sin than the evil itself", he wrote on May, 22, "Moments come in every man's life when he may not, dare not, evade duty. Death in the discharge of such a duty becomes an unfading crown of glory which heroes alone can wear".

The "moment" seemed to have come in Munshiji's own life. His whole spirit revolted against the idea of submission to the new terror of the goonda regime that was fast spreading and was bound to envelope the whole country in a flame of violence, unless measures were concerted in time to quell it. There was raging an inner conflict within him between his duty as a Congressman pledged to Non-violence at all times and his duty to his own conscience and convictions. As a climax to this con-

flict came Gandhiji's own instructions to Congressmen to get out of the Congress if they favoured violent resistance and, if they stayed within, not to associate themselves with any form of training for violent resistance. Was he to follow the Mahatma in his doctrine of Non-violence or follow his own Truth as the Mahatma himself had taught him?

The conflict took shape in a letter which Munshiji forthwith wrote from Naini Tal on May 26 seeking guidance of his *Guru* in the difficult situation that faced him. In that letter (see *Landmark Letters*) Munshiji confessed inability to reconcile himself to the Mahatma's injunctions not to have anything to do with violence in any form. He saw in advance that "Pakistan in action" as was being witnessed in many cities at that time was going to be a normal feature of the country's life for some years to come. "If life, home and shrine and honour of women are threatened by goondaism, organised resistance in self-defence appears to me to be a paramount and inalienable duty, whatever form it may take." He voiced his inner rebellion against silent acquiescence in a course of inaction. He declined to pledge himself "not to preach, help or organise or sympathise with organised resistance to violence in self-defence by all possible means". Yet in spite of all these differences, he sought light of the Master. Who else could be the resort of one who admitted with an outspokenness that is rare:

> "I do not want to be dishonest to myself, nor to the country whose integrity is now threatened nor do I desire to deny myself your inspiration and guidance in this dilemma".

To this "transparent" letter, as Gandhiji characterised it in his reply, the *Guru* while still extolling non-violent resistance as far superior to violent resistance asked him to discuss the matter with him personally.

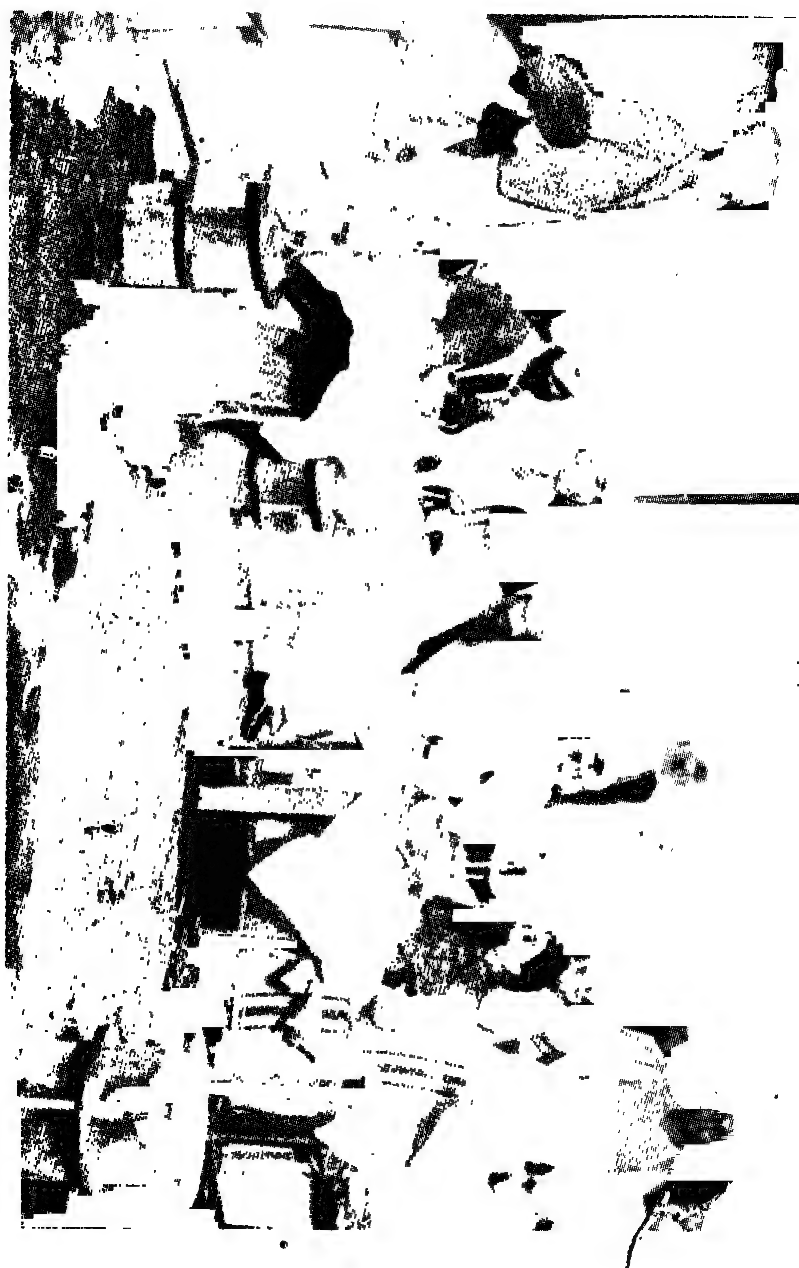
After Munshiji's interview with Gandhiji a statement was issued by the Mahatma explaining the advice he tendered to Munshiji to go out of the Congress and attain freedom of action. "I told him, there came a time in every Congressman's life", said Gandhiji in the statement, "when being a Congressman

dragged him down. That was when there was a conflict between thought and action, for the spring of non-violent action was non-violent thought''.

Munshiji chose ''the only dignified and brave course'', as Gandhiji termed it, and resigned from the Congress. That marked the beginning of a campaign with which his name has since become closely associated as its author and chief protagonist. He saw the threat to the country's integrity if the Disruptionism of the Muslim League was allowed to cut a wound into India's body politic and if its outer manifestation in communal riots went unchecked by organised self-defence. 'India was one, is one and will remain one', he declared from a hundred platforms all over the country and sought to instil that faith in Akhand Hindustan into his countrymen which alone, he felt, could be the antidote to the ''ghost'' of Disruption and to the fear of those who would shrink back from fighting the ghost.

If the cry of ''Akhand Hindustan'' gave a new strength to the wavering and has since helped to solidify the opposition to the idea of vivisection of the Motherland, it was due principally to Munshiji's practically single-handed campaign against the growing monster. And yet that spirit of valiant self-defence was mistaken for aggressive communalism by several people. Shri Ali Bahadur Khan, a nationalist Muslim of Bombay, whose help too was sought by Munshiji in his move to organise an Akhand Hindustan Front, felt that Munshiji's resignation from the Congress ''as judged in the light of argument given by you (Munshiji) is communal and not national''. ''Your action has not weakened the Pakistan movement but has strengthened it. This will increase the communal poison in society,'' he said. In Munshiji's reply he reiterated his nationalist convictions and wondered whether an attempt to close up the ranks of all those who believed in preserving Indian unity could be called a crime?

Munshiji's campaign now directed itself into inspiring the people with a new civic sense and the eradication of the timidity which India's age-long political slavery had given her.



"There is a general hunt after remedies for riots. Many remedies are proposed, discussed, recommended. But there is only one remedy; without it, others are of no avail. It is the possession and exercise of the civic sense by the ordinary citizen".

He preached the *mantra* of the *Gita*: "Yogi is higher than the Ascetic." That resistance was the essence of individual or corporate growth. "If one did not resist, one would become worse than a weed". He warned against appeasing the Disruptionists:

"If anything will strengthen the Disruptionists, it will be the supineness and gullibility of those who stand for Akhand Hindustan. The creed of Disruption has thriven on appeasement so far, and unless Indians put their foot down, the Country will be cleft into bits before they know what is being done".

He appealed to the people to shed the Fear Complex, in words that are reminiscent of the prophets.

"Others try to overawe us, for, we are willing to be overawed. Get rid of the fear complex. I beseach you. Build your cities on the Vesuvius. Plant your feet firmly. Let your head touch the sky. For, India has a message for the weary war-ridden world. India cannot die, for you will save it."

To those who mistook his campaign as an attempt at canalising Hindu group consciousness into communal aggressiveness he explained that Akhand Hindustan was not a political question, nor a religious one.

"The unity and integrity of India is a vital necessity for the existence of all communities in the Country....I oppose the vivisection of India because it negatives both the existence and the future of the Nation....Akhand Hindustan is not a fiction. It is a fact, woven out of racial, economic, and cultural unity and cultural unity of all Indians; strengthened by British rule and overwhelming popular strength; sanctified by tradition and faith."

In its international aspect, he pointed out, it was a fight against the absurdity of national sovereignty for a minority

community when even in the larger national field the idea was already proving its dangerous potentialities.

Having attempted as best he could to keep the nation strong against the rising danger from within, and disappointed in his efforts to effect a *rapprochement* between Indian Nationalism and Britain in his own humble sphere, thanks to Britain's obstinacy, Munshiji could not see any advantage in the suggestion mooted in October 1941 that Congress Ministries should return to office. The late Shri Satyamurti, for instance, strongly advocated such a return to the office which they vacated at the nation's bidding. Though Munshiji considered the 1939 resignation "an unfortunate piece of barren statesmanship", he could not countenance any futile move of co-operating with those who flouted such co-operation. Section 93 Rule, the veto granted by Mr. Amery to the Disruptionists, the filling of the Executive Council with select friends were symptoms of an attitude of deliberate closing of the door to Nationalists. Neither honour nor expediency pointed the way to a return to such servile co-operation in war effort. To Munshiji, office held no glamour when it held out no prospect of real service to the nation's progress.

The war meanwhile had changed its complexion, as many began to realise much later. Even as early as December 1941 Munshiji could perceive the changing shape of the World War II. With the Germans knocking at the gates of Moscow and the Far Eastern situation critical, Munshiji said: "The war is no longer a struggle for racial or political domination but a world cataclysm which will alter the course of history". He therefore pleaded that Britain should win back India to willing co-operation and India should review its politics in the light of the new conditions. Very soon with Japan's entry into the war and her capture of Rangoon, India was actually in the war, though so long she had escaped its direct repercussions. "This is no longer a war of 'imperialism'. It has become the war of freedom and of Indian integrity" he pleaded and decried Britain's slowness in moving to win India even when Indian soil was going to be the scene of battle. The recognition of the changing nature of the war was reflected also in the Working

Committee's resolution on January 1942 offering association in war effort if India were guaranteed independence. Munshiji supported that resolution and looked forward to prompt steps to "set up a plenary government of power and strength in the Centre" and "converting the war into a successful crusade against totalitarianism". That resolution passed at Wardha was a vindication of Munshiji's stand in regard to the limitations of non-violence. It was clear that many Congressmen had begun to think like him that Non-violence could not be accepted by ordinary men for all times, particularly when self-defence was involved.

In January 1942, suggestions were already afloat—there was no mistaking its Disruptionist source—that a scheme of fifty-fifty representation to Muslims on the one hand and Hindus and others on the other in the Centre may be accepted in substitution for Pakistan. He described it a "sinister scheme" which can only be countenanced by men of loose thinking. The increasing audacity of the Disruptionists, raised to giddiest heights by Britain's panicky Congressphobia, only increased his awareness of the double danger to India's integrity, from within and without, and rendered stronger his faith in Federalism both national and international as the best recipe for India in the new world that was in the making.

When the Cripps Mission was announced in March, Munshiji welcomed it heartily, not merely because of his confidence in Sir Stafford Cripps, for whom, he said, Democracy was no imperialist slogan, but a living faith. His friendliness and concern for India were readily recognised by Munshiji unlike those who were only too ready to denounce him in advance as just another agent of Churchill. Sir Stafford's personal sincerity and the international conditions which actuated the Cripps offer were enough grounds for Munshiji to plead:

> "If Sir Stafford's is an honest and bona fide attempt at friendship it must not be allowed to fail. The offer may be little. What we want may be very much more. But the spirit of camaraderie forged by the new friendship, *if achieved,* will adjust constitutional proprieties under happier auspices."

When the offer was known Munshiji was quick to recognise its defects. He described it as "illogical in the extreme". But he admitted its bona fides, and urged,

> "We want both integrity and freedom. If the choice has to be made,—I hope the nation won't be put to it—the way before it is clear. It should choose integrity to freedom, waiting for a better chance of attaining both. For, without integrity for India there is no freedom."

When at last the Mission failed, he called it "a first class catastrophe for the cause of democracy all the world over". That catastrophe and the resultant frustration led some like Rajaji into the arms of the very danger which the Nation has consistently sought to avoid. Even at the time of the Cripps offer, Munshiji could understand Rajaji the Realist getting embittered by the unending period of negation which the Congress policy seemed to be based upon. But he was not slow to see that Rajaji had allied himself with the Muslim League against the whole country. When the A.I.C.C. by an overwhelming majority threw out the Rajaji resolution and passed Jagat Narain Lal's resolution formally asserting the integrity of the country, none could be gladder than the protagonist of Akhand Hindustan. The country was in no mood to hear of the counsel for vivisection.

Settlement at any price, and a "national" government at the Centre, were now fast becoming a fatish with wide sections of opinion. Munshiji consistently argued that the preservation of national integrity was more important than the fiction of a national government which was then impossible except on the basis of a virtual surrender to the Disruptionist claims.

In the Quit India resolution and the "bureaucratic blitzkrieg" which precipitated the movement, Munshiji found an unnecessary conflict forced on India by British intransigence.

And he warned again:

> "Indians can easily be repressed; they cannot be turned into friends by coercion....A policy of repression is highly dangerous to the United Nations as also to India."



With C. Rajagopalachariar

As one of the few leaders free to organise public opinion outside in favour of the national cause Munshiji did invaluable service. He went about from one corner of the country to another to defend Congressmen from the tenatcles of bureaucratic tyranny.

* * *

When again Gandhiji went on fast and the nation was waiting with bated breath for some stroke of Fate that would save the Mahatma once again for the Nation, Munshiji was one of those who organised the Leaders' Conference to demand the release of Gandhiji. They only voiced the Nation's demand, but it had to take an articulate form through an assembly of all the leading public men of India outside the jails. It cannot be denied that the Conference which was attended by practically the leaders of all parties and communities, focussed world attention to the callousness to which the Linlithgow regime had descended under Mr. Amery's auspices, and rallied the whole nation in support of Gandhiji's stand.

In March 1945, Dr. Khan Saheb, leader of the Congress Party in the N. W. F. Province accepted the premiership, evidently with the consent of Gandhiji. This return to office for the first time after 1939, and the emphatic declaration of Gandhiji that mass civil disobedience had been given up, pointed to resuming the thread of co-operation needlessly snapped in November 1939. Munshiji saw in it a gleam of hope that the country was at least coming out of the woods and reiterated his firm conviction that the surest way to improve the Indo-British relations was to implement the Act of 1935 to its full implications during the war, leaving its modifications to the post-war period. He considered that the release of the Working Committee members, restoration of provincial ministries and inauguration of the Federal part of the Act as the essential immediate steps.

When in April the Sapru Committee appointed by the non-party leaders published their recommendations Munshiji whole-heartedly supported its proposals for the restoration of provincial autonomy and the fuller implementation of the 1935 Act.

With the defeat of Germany, in 1945, the world situation had crystallised into a new shape. Munshiji saw the growing conflict between Russian and British spheres of influence, and pleaded for a new British Commonwealth including India, Burma and Ceylon as additional free members of the British Commonwealth. He saw in Indian and other Asiatic nationalisms the real force which stood between these large masses and Communism, and felt that the emergence of such a Fourth Commonwealth of Nations could alone prevent the rising power of Russia and another world conflict with it.

The Wavell Offer too was welcomed by Munshiji as another chance to cement the relations between India and Britain whose lot had been cast together by history. But when the Simla Conference, held on the basis of the Wavell Plan failed, Munshiji realised that in spite of the failure, Nationalism gained a fresh triumph there and that British Government was at last getting down from the fence.

Labour's victory at the British general elections encouraged Munshiji to hope that with its known sympathy to Indian aspirations and faced with the choice of wooing India into comradeship or throwing into the arms of the anti-British world, Labour's coming to power would mark a turn in Indo-British history.

The Congress was returning to constitutional activities and power; and naturally many eyes turned to Munshiji, the ex-Home-Minister who had created a tradition. But Munshiji knew his limitations. His resignation from the Congress had been misunderstood and ambitious rivals had created a wall of prejudice against him. His advocacy of Akhand Hindusthan was now brought into service to represent that he was not a nationalist.

But two men knew him well, Gandhiji and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. They were waiting for an opportunity to utilise his services in the nation's cause. But Munshiji was firm. "I will not come into the Congress by the back door", one of the diary notes of his conversation records. "I will come back only if I can do so as honourably as I went out. The world does not know that *Bapu* asked me to go out of the Congress. I will

not come back for the elections; if I do so, my usefulness to the country will suffer."

On one thing, however, he was firm. He did not want to go back to the provincial field. He was pressed to rejoin the Congress in order to defeat the prejudice created against him. He had, however, made up his mind. Unless Gandhiji's advice was forthcoming he would not join.

In October 1945 the leaders of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee wanted him to be nominated for the Central Assembly from Bombay. At night Sardar Patel's message came that he should apply for being nominated. "I walked about in the compound for some time. I tried to conquer *raga* and *dwesha*. I surrendered myself to God. The reply came—I should not rejoin unless Gandhiji approves" reads his diary for the 22nd of October 1945. He then sent a curious telegram to Sardar Patel:

> "Your kind letter. Noted advice. Patil just telephoned he and Bombay friends very keen I should stand for Assembly and have consulted you. When I left Congress under *Bapu's* advice I had taken it as God's will. I will again take it God's will that I should resume my services inside the Congress if *Bapu* sends approval of my proposed step with Patil or by wire."

In one of his Gujarati letters to Sardar Patel Munshiji wrote:

> "I read your affectionate letter with care. I know how great is the confidence *Bapu* and you place in me, and also the goodwill which both of you bear towards me. I am bound to you for ever.
>
> I accepted *Bapu's* advice and left the Congress. I thought it was God's will. I was therefore in no hurry to return to the Congress and am not in a hurry now. I can only be useful to the Congress if I return to it as honourably as I went out.
>
> In 1928 when I came close to you in the Bardoli affair I broke all my old political contacts though they were highly beneficial. I delighted in breaking them. When in 1930, after the Dandi March, I joined the Congress, it was to go to jail in search of my ideals. Whatever I did thereafter, you fully know. I did all I could for the cause

even after I parted from the Congress. I felt that God was putting me on trial; and I submitted. Even when out of the Congress, I am now doing all I can for it and will continue to do so.

But I do not think my usefulness to the Congress will increase by my being a four anna member. On the contrary I smell *raga* in the step, as if I am a suppliant for some benefit from the Congress. I will do for the country all I can. I shall serve the Congress as best as I can. And so long as you two are there, I can have no joy higher than being worthy of your confidence. But I am not convinced that the Congress will be benefited by my rejoining it. I am, therefore, not sure whether it is my *dharma* to rejoin it. Nothing is lost by a little delay. We shall settle the matter in consultation, you, *Bapu* and me."

These were days of spiritual doubts for Munshiji. His diary again and again seeks mandate from above.

Later the three met and Gandhiji advised Munshiji to rejoin the Congress. He wrote a letter to Gandhiji (vide *Landmark Letters*) and rejoined the Congress.

"Soon thereafter Pandit Jawaharlal appointed Munshiji on the Experts Committee of the Congress for doing the spadework for being placed before the Constituent Assembly. He was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly, worked on the Procedure Committee and piloted the Rules of the Assembly at its last sittings.

What future work is in store for him, who can tell?

*　　*　　*

Munshiji in politics has lacked the one track mind and complete self-surrender; he is too versatile. He has also been denied a sturdy constitution, which is so essential for a politician, if he wants to come to the top in the Gandhian era of politics. He can organise a party well, but cannot maintain a steady relish for intrigues—which is a *sine qua non* for pushing one's way through the maze of manoeuvres which the internal framework of a modern party invariably contains. And above all, he is too true to his own Truth—as he calls it, and too outspoken in his advocacy of it, to fit into the iron framework of a well regimented party like the Congress. And though



CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY - Opening Day 9-12-1946

Dr. Ambedkar. Shri Sarat Chandra Bose. Sardar Patel. Dr. M. R. Javakar. Premier Kher and Munshiji

surrendering his better judgment often to Gandhiji he is at bottom, too modern to absorb Gandhian ways in politics. He has suffered for the Congress; the Congress, because of his handicaps, could give little to a man of such outstanding energy, eloquence and ability. But his political vision has been unerring. He revolted against the boycott of Councils in 1919, 1933, 1939 and 1942; and he stands vindicated to-day. He was asked to leave the Congress for realizing the inevitability of violence in self-defence; and the principal disciples of the Prophet of Non-violence who control the Congress, have given up non-violence. In 1941 he raised his voice—lonely but nevertheless powerful—in defence of Akhand Hindusthan and against the appeasement of Disruptionism, and those who looked down upon him then and pronounced him a traitor to the Congress, are all struggling to maintain the unity of the country and to defeat Disruptionism, and are regretting that they so far fought the monster with kid gloves and made Pakistan reputable by unsuccessful appeasement which they termed 'reasonable solution'.

"India was one, is one and shall remain one" Munshiji's battle cry will be the battle cry of India till the ghost of Disruption is laid. And if it comes—which God forbid—Munshiji will, if need be, seek extinction fighting for the noble gospel which he has made his own.

2

Law

I

FOREWORD

I have known Munshi, and known him well, for nearly 25 years. I vividly remember entering the Bar common room as a freshly enrolled Barrister. All the giants of the Bar were there—Inverarity, Strangman, Jinnah, Kanga, Bhulabhai, Taraporewalla, Coltman. To my young and terrified eyes this seemed to be a ring of steel impossible to penetrate. But I could see that there was a second line of young and energetic aspirants who had already made some inroads upon this citadel. Among these, Munshi was one of the most prominent.

It did not take me long to get on friendly terms with Munshi. We had many things in common. We did not think, as most of our seniors did, that Law was the *ultima ratio* of our existence. It was a fascinating profession, a great training and discipline for the mind; if you succeeded, the prizes were great and glittering. But it would be a terrible thing to spend all your life in reading your briefs and expounding the law to the rather lonely and pathetic figure on the Bench. By the way, we had been nurtured on the sturdy traditions of the Bar, and had a healthy contempt for the Bench. We had only one life to lead, and there were far more interesting things to do—Politics, Literature, Art.

The first thing that impressed me about Munshi was his versatility. He was interested in so many things. And his interest was that of an artist. He had the insatiable curiosity—which is the beginning of Art. He had the instinct which could see the hidden meaning behind superficial phenomena—which is the artistic temperament. And he had the gift of expression—which is the capacity of the artist to express himself.

As years went by, he and I appeared in many cases together, and were opposed to each other in several others. It was always a pleasure and an intellectual treat to have him as

a Leader. I remember that he always used to ask me to come for a conference in all important cases to his house in the morning. After the conference I used to have breakfast with him, and then go to Court together. I used always to wonder at the very small quantity of food he consumed, and I always joked with him that he must be finding sustenance from some celestial manna which he concealed from us.

Conference with Munshi was never a slovenly, hurried affair. It was a solemn, full-dressed debate. We tried to find the principles underlying the mass of ill-digested facts which were packed in our briefs. Munshi would have a sheet of foolscap before him with a fountain pen in his hand and would jot down the various propositions under which the different facts should be grouped. He would only feel happy when he discovered the silver thread that showed us the way out of the labyrinth of our case. And then he would stand before the Judge in Court stating the propositions *seriatim*, looking at him and the other side with a query in his eyes—How can there be any answer to these propositions? Of course, there was always a danger of over-simplification. Unfortunately, neither facts nor law can be reduced to simple and lucid propositions. But this was an infinitely better method than the chaotic opening of a case in which you never see the wood for the trees.

Munshi has always liked to work on a large canvas. He likes to present his case in the grand manner. The artist in him gives to every case the complexion of a breathless drama. He gives you the idea that the eternal verities are on the side of his client and that in deciding the case in which he is engaged you are making legal history. Therefore, it follows that Munshi is never very happy in the rough and tumble of a lawyer's work. As was said of a senior member of the Bar, and a very dear friend of mine, he cannot make small points with large gestures. He makes important points with a considerable economy of gestures.

Munshi has a subtle and ingenious mind. The literary and the legal mind are two entirely different things. They are rarely combined in one person. Success in one field is usually a disqualification for the other. It is the greatest of Munshi's

triumphs that he has made a great name for himself both as a lawyer and as a literary artist. But I think his first and abiding love is for the Muses. He has given to Law and Politics much of his time, energy and enthusiasm which the gods had intended he should give for the service of literature. But therein, I think, lies Munshi's great charm. He could have been a dry uninteresting lawyer or a cold and calculating politician. He is neither the one nor the other. The artist in him is always peeping from behind the lawyer and the politician. And, therefore, both in his advocacy and in his politics there is the element of the incalculable. I will not speak of his politics. But at the Bar he has often startled both his opponent and the Judge by urging a point which has struck no one, and yet which has often proved decisive of the case.

Chesterton once said of Shaw that there were some who understood him but did not like him. There were others who liked him but did not understand him. He alone both liked and understood him. I also can say that I both like and understand Munshi—though more often than not I do not agree with him. But life would be a very dull thing if all agreed with one another. And how would so versatile and dynamic a personality as Munshi fit in?

M. C. Chagla

II

MUNSHIJI IN LAW

The Munshis of Broach had, in every generation, more than one lawyer at any rate, during the last few generations. At one time, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were not less than eleven members of that large family connected with the profession of law and revenue collection. Munshiji's great-grandfather, Karsondas Munshi, was a distinguished lawyer in those days, who, for some time, was Government pleader of the Sadar Court at Surat and later the Sadar-Ameen, what we now call Civil Judge, of Thana, then a position of great standing. Narbheram, the grandfather, was also a lawyer. Munshiji's father, Maneklal, served in the revenue department rising to the rank of Deputy Collector and there were at the time not less than five or six lawyers in the family. The story runs, as narrated by Munshiji in his Autobiography, that when his uncle rode to Bombay on a horse in order to get the coveted diploma of a High Court Pleader, the then Government Pleader, Dhirajlal Mathuradas, told the Chief Justice that the Munshis "sucked law with their mother's milk." Another uncle of his, well known in the Gujarat of that day, Hardevaram—shortly called 'Adhubhai'—Munshi, was the colleague and friend of two other well-known lawyers Narbheram Thakore and Harilal Setalvad. Evidently, there was something in the doctrine of "sucking law with the mother's milk". For, Munshiji, nephew of 'Adhubai' Munshi, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, son of Harilal Setalvad, and his son, Shri Motilal Setalvad, and Narbheram Thakore's son, Shri Govindlal Thakore, have all been distinguished lawyers in their own generations.

In 1903 Maneklal Munshi died leaving young Munshi in very poor circumstances.

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A few days after the death of Maneklal Munshi in 1903, a neighbour, thinking that it was the right moment to take the Munshis by surprise, launched a street dispute in which a latrine was involved! The recent death of his father, the difficulties and worries caused thereby together with a load of other responsibilities, added to which were the daily threats of this neighbour, caused young Munshi a good deal of trouble and annoyance. At the age of eighteen he had to file a suit, and there followed the regular hunt for witnesses and evidence. The suit ultimately reached hearing and young Munshi had his first practical insight into the majesty of law by having to go through a gruelling experience of a three days' cross-examination. That litigation went on until 1913 and the Munshis came out of it successfully—and not the less truculent for it.

In July 1910, Kanaiyalal Munshi passed his LL.B. examination. On the 22nd of July 1910, a distinctly memorable day for him, he came to Bombay to receive his Law degree, and went to see Shri Manchhashankar, a brother of the more famous Jamietram, more popularly known as 'Jamietramkaka' in the Bombay High Court and a founder of the solicitors' firm of Messrs. Matubhai Jamietram and Madan. From the rooms of Jamietram peeped in a well-gloomed gentleman, said "well Manchhashankarbhai, how are you?", and then bade him good-night. "That was Bhulabhai Desai, Advocate," said Manchhashankar. "Once a professor in Ahmedabad—he is now making four thousand a month. Why don't you too become an Advocate?"

By sheer accident Bhulabhai entered in the life of the young lawyer and indirectly contributed in a large degree to his future way in life. Munshiji records this accidental meeting in his inimitable style. "Can this be called an accident?" he asks. "Bhulabhai and I have always been chained together, willy-nilly, like two stars equi-distantly and yet nearby, roaming in the limitless sky—separate from each other and yet joined together by a magnetic force."

In March 1907 young Munshi, with the Degree of Bachelor of Arts as his only worldly equipment, arrived in Bombay to have his first taste of law. On arrival he made straight for Shri Krishnalal Jhaveri, (now Dewan Bahadur) a friend of the family who was the only influential individual then known to him in Bombay. Shri Jhaveri was until then practising in the High Court and had just been appointed a Judge in the Small Causes Court. He gave him a note of recommendation on Dinshaw Mulla (later, Sir Dinshaw Mulla) who was then the Principal of the Law College. The first experience of law ended in a disappointment in as much as the Principal expressed his regret for not allowing the young aspirant the necessary term. Young Munshi then returned to Broach.

In June 1907 Munshi again came to Bombay to prosecute his law studies. After some interval, when he stayed as a guest of a relative, he tried to settle down in Kandewadi, in Bombay, by approaching the Trustees of Kanji Khetsey Chawl (of which Munshiji is a Trustee at present) for a room; but his request was turned down at first as he had no womanfolk to come and live with him. One of the Trustees, on hearing his surname, asked him if he was a relative of 'Adhubhai' Munshi who was for sometime the Receiver of the Dakore Temple. On being assured that he happened to be the nephew of 'Adhubhai', the Trustees directed the Bhaiyya to give this nephew of the famous Receiver a decent room without the guarantee which the presence of a wife involved. The incident is important because in his first approach to Bombay life, young Munshi came across two big institutions—the Kanji Khetsey Trust and the Dakore Temple—with which in later years he not only came into close contact but was responsible for their development to a considerable extent.

During this early period Shri Dalpatram Shukla, now a solicitor practising in the Bombay High Court, and Shri Pranlal Munshi of Baroda, a lawyer and a leader of the local Praja Mandal, were his constant companions. In between his legal studies, much of the time was spent by young Munshi and his friends in the Petit Library or in political discussions

or long walks at Chowpatty interspersed sometimes with visits to Gujarati and Urdu theatres which at that time happened to be the highlights of the Bombay entertainment world.

The most important intellectual influences on young Munshi's mind during this period were the *Gita* whose verses he had made a practice of reciting and memorising and the works of Carlyle. About the latter he wrote in his diary: "Carlyle has become my best companion. He has given me considerable confidence."

In October 1910 young Munshi decided to go in for the Advocate's Examination. Writing to his friend at that time he complains, as all other prospective advocates must have done, that it was tiresome to have to keep on staring at the robed barristers and lawyers. The whole affair, he grumbled, was futile!

The literary coterie of Shri Chandrashankar Pandya came to consider the young lawyer as their chief pride and in 1912 young Munshi began to take an increasingly large part in the debates and discourses held under the auspices of the Students' Brotherhood. During this year, the Brotherhood advertised its intention to give the Motiwala Prize for the best essay on "The Theory and Practice of Social Service." Young Munshi had the satisfaction of receiving the coveted medal from the hands of Lady Rattan Tata amidst the applause of Shri Chandrashankar and his friends. Many were the opportunities that he got in debates and meetings to cultivate a habit of marshalling facts and points on social reform and of propounding propositions, in both of which fields Munshiji in later years was to excel before the Bench.

Even yet, the natural diffidence, born of mofussil breeding and atmosphere, had not entirely vanished. In February 1913 the Advocate's Examination was held, wherein young Munshi appeared. Writing then to one of his friends he says: "There is little hope of success; weak health—weaker still was the preparation." Again, he wrties: "Questions were fair, so were the answers, but there are such sturdy candidates that they are sure to beat me." In March he went for the first time to Matheran, which has since then become his second home. There

he enjoyed Nature's lavish green foliage, and wrote: "Came to Matheran. The journey was delightful. The earth's beauty is alluring. Panorama Point is grand. From there a marvellous view greets the eye." In his Autobiography he speaks of his first visit to Matheran with great fervour. "I saw a mountain for the first time in my life. The thick foliage of its trees, lovely groves, the twitter of the birds and the sweet fragrance of its wild flowers have constantly given me quiet and inspiration. Wandering on its roads, I have come there to many a great decision in my life. Even now I write this Autobiography here." On the 11th of March, a telegram arrived in Matheran bringing the tidings that he had successfully passed through the great trial and with that news young Munshi became an advocate in the great and reputed line of Inverarity, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Sir Jamshedji Kanga. "I have become an advocate," he writes in his diary, "doubts, difficulties and diffidence have vanished."

The 15th of March 1913 found young Munshi in somebody's borrowed gowns and bands being formally introduced to the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Beaman. Messrs. Shamrao Minochehar and Hiralal gave him on that day his first brief and provided an opportunity for his maiden appearance. Shri Jamietram, who was then the most eminent amongst Hindu Solicitors and who bossed over them as he did over his own firm of Messrs. Matubhai Jamietram & Madan, arranged for the young advocate a chamber in a neighbouring attorney's firm on a monthly rent of Rs. 15 and did not forget to give him characteristic advice not to adjust the chamber rent due against fees payable by the attorney. The chamber was worse than a jail room with only a roof ventilator for light. The next room contained old, musty, stinking records, which, during the monsoon, sent out insects careering into the adjoining chamber of the young lawyer. In this cave-like chamber young Munshi spent his waiting period with all the anxieties and tribulations which every junior at the bar has to undergo.

Shri Jamietram apart from being an astute attorney, possessed certain outstanding qualities which would have stood him in good stead in any profession or occupation he would



Munshiji enrolled as Advocate (March 15, 1913)

have chosen to follow. Wherever he went, he breathed strength, orderliness and self-confidence and often was a pillar of strength to his solicitors and brother clients. He took an amazing delight in possessing other people's lives. During his career as a solicitor, he repaired the broken fortunes of many a client. Shri Jamietram now commenced taking interest in young Munshi which meant that he had decided to take in hand the entire legal career of the young lawyer. He and Shri Narmadashankar of Messrs. Manchershaw and Narmadashankar started sending small briefs to young Munshi. Likewise, he also decided that the young lawyer would best *devil* with Shri Bhulabhai Desai, although young Munshi, as irony would have it, would rather have joined Shri Jinnah's chamber. But Shri Jamietram ultimately prevailed by merely stating that there would be a variety of things to learn at Shri Bhulabhai's.

On the 12th of June 1913 Shri Jamietram took the nervous, self-diffident Munshi to Shri Bhulabhai, who had just returned from England. He was duly introduced. Shri Bhulabhai smiled in the way people who knew him well could realise, and young Munshi was left to make his way in the august chamber. On the first day the master told the pupil: "Lowndes once told me what I am telling you. If you will be useful to me, I will likewise be useful to you. Come here at about 6-30 in the evening and meet me when I am alone here. Generally the solicitors do not appreciate a third man being present." Thus ended the first interview between the master and the pupil.

From the next day, the life of a fresh advocate who begins his legal life in the High Court, started with its dry and uninteresting routine. Like all newcomers who join the High Court, young Munshi used to start from home at ten in the morning, read the whole day, sit in his cave of a chamber until half-past six waiting for the rare sight of an attorney, and then attend Shri Bhulabhai's chamber, and wait there until his senior was free from the usual round of consultations. Then with all the rest of the *devils*, young Munshi would go in and put a question or two on irrelevant matters to attract the attention of the great man.

In July 1913 young Munshi got his first responsible brief and appeared before Chief Justice Scott in an appeal from the Thana Court. Sir Basil Scott was one of the few judges who had not the habit of sailing with a senior counsel. Sir Basil was indifferent whether a senior or a junior appeared before him. To him facts were paramount; personalities of little importance.

When young Munshi came the next day to the Court he found to his great concern that he was being opposed by no less a person than the Advocate-General, now Sir Thomas Strangman. Sir Thomas used then to be a terror to the junior Bar, very often to the Bench as well, and was inclined, like many a counsel, to interfere when the other side was arguing. Conducting a first matter is always a nervous affair and young Munshi fumbled and mis-stated a fact or two. Up stood Sir Thomas and sneeringly corrected him. But Sir Basil was vigilant and with his characteristic severity cried halt to the Advocate-General. "Mr. Advocate-General, your innings are still to come." Sir Thomas felt perplexed, sat down. "Mr. Munshi," the great judge said, "You may now proceed," and proceed he did without any more untoward incident.

A few days later Shri Jamshedji Kanga (now Sir Jamshedji and a doyen of the Bombay Bar)—rolled in into the library as he always does (he never walks or strolls in) and greeted the young Advocate. "Are you Munshi?" "Yes", said the thrilled advocate. "You conducted a case before Scott a few days ago?" "Yes". "He has formed a good opinion about you. I had a talk with him in the club. He remembered you when he was making appointments of law professors but you are so much of a junior." Nothing tangible happened but it was heartening to the young lawyer to be mentioned by a Chief Justice and complimented by Shri Kanga. The year rolled on monotonously with many a day spent in the library interspersed with a few appeals sent from the mofussil and a few briefs contrived by Shri Jamietram and his attorney friends. The fee book for the year 1913 showed a gross receipt of Rs. 1,150—a figure considered not bad for a fresher.

Before he enrolled himself at the Bar, young Munshi had joined the Articled Clerks' Association. Amongst the more known men in the Association were Shri Nayansukhlal Pandya, Shri Manilal Nanavati, Shri B. G. Kher (now the Premier of Bombay) and Shri Dhanjishah Nanavati. Shri Pandya passed his Solicitor's examination in March 1912 and started his own firm. In September of that year Shri Manilal became solicitor and joined his brother's firm. Later on, when Shri Kher became a solicitor in 1918, Munshiji was helpful in starting the firm of Messrs. Manilal and Kher. The friendly relations which thus commenced in 1918 remained unbroken and reached their climax when Munshiji joined the first Congress Ministry headed by Shri Kher in 1937. About this period Shri Kher became the secretary of Mr. Justice Beaman. Owing to some eye trouble Beaman was not able to see properly, much less read. Nevertheless, the judge was both a keen scholar and an ardent lover of books. Shri Kher used to read to him and spend most of his time with the judge and went more than once on European tours with him. Through his close friendship with Shri Kher, Munshiji too came into personal contact with the judge. When he appeared before Beaman, the judge used to treat him kindly and gave the young lawyer great encouragement.

It was in Mr. Justice Beaman's Court that young Munshi had his first big case on the original side. An illiterate grass merchant had died leaving behind him two widows, a mistress and a son by the mistress and a fortune consisting of 5 to 6 lacs of rupees. The case of the mistress was that she was a legally wedded wife of the deceased and her son was his legitimate child and heir of the fortune. Young Munshi was briefed as the junior of Shri Rustom Wadia for the mistress and her son. Shri Rustom Wadia was considered by the attorneys as the favourite of Mr. Justice Beaman and was in great demand in that Court. Every morning and evening the solicitor and the junior counsel used to meet and make preparations for the impending trial. The junior would complain to the solicitor that there was neither the requisite evidence nor preparation. The solicitor used to counsel patience and comfort the junior

by assuring that everything would be done. One day the junior said that if his client was a wedded wife there must be some evidence of marriage. The solicitor turned to his clerk and asked where that evidence was. The clerk complacently replied: "I will bring the witnesses tonight." "But if the wedding took place," said the counsel, "there must be the invitation cards, the priest to perform the wedding." "Oh! yes, that's true," said the attorney, and turned again to his clerk inquiring as to where the evidence was. The clerk assured that even that evidence would be brought the next day. When the motley crowd of witnesses was brought before Shri Rustom Wadia, he turned to his junior saying that he felt there was something wrong somewhere. Anyway the trial commenced; witnesses after witnesses, all of them, needless to say, eye-witnesses of the marriage, went in and out of the witness-box, each narrating the picturesque story in detail to the surprise of the other side. Ultimately, the case was, as it happens in all such cases, compromised and the mistress with the ambition of being styled the legally wedded wife of the grass merchant, received a not too inconsiderable amount and so also did the precious heir.

Shri H. V. Divatia (now Sir Harsidhbhai Divatia) and one or two other friends had started practice by now on the appellate side and very often young Munshi began to be briefed on the appellate side in several mofussil appeals. Some friends in Surat and Broach were keen on giving all possible help to him. A dispute arose about an election in the Rander Municipality and young Munshi was briefed to appear in the Surat District Court. When the train started young Munshi found in the next compartment his old friend Sir Thomas Strangman who still somewhat terrified the young lawyer. With great bravado, young Munshi addressed the District Junge for four hours. Sir Thomas addressed for half an hour and won. The client gave young Munshi a packet of Surat sweets and the lawyer paid his own railway fare home.

How dangerous an opponent Shri Jamietram could be can be seen from the following incident.

Young Munshi had drafted a plaint which, according to him could not have any reply. The plaintiff complained that his wife had deserted him and had gone and stayed with her uncle M. He claimed conjugal rights and a return of ornaments which, according to this innocent victim of domestic cruelty were of the value of Rs. 50,000. No written statement was filed and, in course of time, the suit appeared as an undefended long cause. The defendant was not expected to appear at the time of hearing. Young Munshi was briefed and he thought that he had simply to lead evidence of the love-torn husband and ask for a decree. At 2-15 p.m. when young Munshi went into Mr. Justice Beaman's court he found not the defendant but Shri Jamietrram seated there brooding.

Jamietram: "Are you in this case?"

Munshi: "Yes."

Jamietram: "Are you taking a decree in this case?"

Munshi: "Oh! Yes, of course."

Jamietram: "All right. Let's see how you take it."

In the voice of Shri Jamietram, young Munshi found some invisible threat. All the enthusiasm with which he had entered the Court gradually trickled away. When the case was called out the defendant was not there but the Registrar of the Court got up from his seat and handed over the Judge a letter. Old Jamietram was sitting opposite with a steady smile on him which appeared more dangerous than ever. The letter was written by the wife alleging that the plaintiff was an unemployed idler, had wasted such little property as she had brought from her father and was addicted to cocaine, and that tired of his cruelty she had, out of sheer desperation, gone for support to her uncle. The Judge barked at young Munshiji. "Your client appears to be a veritable rascal." "Nothing of the kind", said the advocate bravely, and added: "My client is going into the box presently and your Lordship then will see that these allegations are totally false." The plaintiff then entered the box with a lump of betel leaf in his mouth, his cap tilted on one side and his whole appearance distorted by a long tongue ceaselessly lolling out from one side of his mouth. "Are you the plaintiff in this suit?" was the first question. The

witness, instead of looking at the counsel, turned to the Judge. "My lord", came his voice in a slow rolling way—"*Khun* (murder) committed—my father-in-law—by Jamietram Jivanram, Solicitor, High Court and M. T. Diwan—". Munshiji then realised why Shri Jamietram was there all along. A great effort was necessary to save the situation. "My lord", said he, "the witness does not understand English; he needs the aid of the interpreter." But the Judge by then was more than ever interested in the husband and wanted to probe the murder mystery. He questioned the witness: "What happened to this murder?" "My lord", came the reply, "my father-in-law's *khun* committed—Jamietram Jivanram, Solicitor, High Court—M. T. Diwan of."—A smile came on the Judge's face. Shri Rustom Wadia who was watching with great interest the spectacle whispered to young Munshi in a not too inaudible voice to pray for withdrawal of the suit with liberty to file a fresh suit. Young Munshi's attorney, of course, had fled by this time and the Judge announced with the objectivity associated with our judicial administration: "Mr. Munshi, you cannot do anything better than this."

After two or three years of hard work young Munshi had already gained the confidence of Shri Bhulabhai Desai. During the strenuous period of *devilling*, young Munshi used to prepare for his senior a number of pleadings and opinions; much time also used to be spent on preparing exhaustive analysis of other briefs. Many a time Shri Bhulabhai used to take young Munshi to his residence directly from the chamber and there both of them used to work out brief after brief, till late hours. Shri Bhulabhai had an extraordinary analytical mind and a way of stating and re-stating facts and propositions of law. He used to start by saying 'no' to everything you said and then arrange the facts in his own mind in his own way. At last he would say, "Munshikaka, now they fit in." This method had enabled Shri Bhulabhai to conduct many a big case merely by relying on his memory. More than his ability to present his case, he possessed the wonderful gift of knowing that a particular manner of presentation would go a long way with a parti-

cular judge and that way, after an address of fifteen or thirty minutes, he could generally win over that judge to his side.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, who has now already become a legend in the Bombay Bar, had come in contact with young Munshi in some cases, and young Munshi had by this time already appeared in some suits as his junior. Sir Chimanlal's advocacy was of a different category. He depended entirely on sheer intellectual strength and a vast knowledge of psychology and human nature. He never depended upon the cheaper weapons, that are sometimes, though fortunately rarely, used to please the Bench. No attempt to please either the client or the solicitor was permitted. The opposite side always and invariably received courtesy and fairness. The Bench was dealt with dignity and severity and rarely allowed to digress from the path which Sir Chimanlal had decided it should tread. Scientific precision of language and a presence of mind and an imperturbability almost superhuman were the main traits of his advocacy.

Intense *devilling* with a senior entails hard work without any direct reward for it. But reward sometimes comes unexpectedly. In 1917 the well-known case regarding the trade name of the famous jewellers of Bombay, Narottamdas Bhau, was being attended to by Shri Nariman of Messrs. Ardeshir Hormusji Dinshaw, Solicitors. The defendant, one Soni Narottamdas Bhanji, had started a rival concern and Narottamdas Bhau had filed a suit for injunction to restrain his rival from conducting a similar business with almost a similar trade name. Shri Nariman had briefed Shri Bhulabhai for the plaintiff. While Shri Bhulabhai was addressing the Court, he asked young Munshi, who was not then briefed, to find an appropriate case, telling him that he would still address for an hour and that his *devil* should find a case in the meanwhile. Young Munshi rushed to the library and after a few minutes of rush-work found the wanted precedent. Shri Bhulabhai relied on that case. Next day, Shri Nariman met young Munshi in the library and said: "Mr. Mehta, you have, I hope, received my brief." "My name is not Mehta, and I have not received your brief," said the junior. "But you brought that case to

Bhulabhai, is it not?", and "are you not K. M. Mehta? Is not your chamber in Bhaishankar's office?" asked the Attorney. "No, Mr. M. J. Mehta happens to have his chamber there, not I" said young Munshi, feeling that the fat egg had already slipped from his hands. Shri Nariman immediately went, panting as was usual with him, to the mistaken counsel, brought the required brief and almost pushed the thing into young Munshi's hands, adding: "Do your best." Such are the random rewards of *devilling,* a system which if a junior is lucky enough to have a responsive senior to work for, is fruitful. The fees earned in this brief brought the first library cup-board and the first ornament to the Munshi household.

In the May vacation of 1917 Bhulabhai took young Munshi to Darjeeling. Shri Chottubhai of Messrs. Madhavji & Co. also was a member of the party. Shri Chhotubhai was a great lover of art and literature, apart from his qualities as an eminent solicitor of the day. The elderly solicitor and the young advocate spent many an hour reading together great classics like *Meghaduta, Gita Govinda* and *Amaru Shatak.* Shri Chhotubhai had read Munshiji's first novel *Verni Vasulat* and was already highly attracted towards the novel, as also to its writer. It was during this tour that young Munshi met the famous scientist Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose and learnt the miraculous mysteries of plant life upon which Sir Jagadish then had already finished his famous discoveries.

Among the giants of the times, Shri Lallubhai Shah, (after wards Sir Lallubhai), was one of the few with whom young Munshi came into close contact and for whom he entertained great regard and affection. Sir Lallubhai's incomparable ethical sense, his great sense of justice, and moderation of speech and thought attracted the respect of every one with whom he came into touch. On the 1st of April, 1913 Shri Lallubhai Shah was raised to the Bench on the retirement of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar. Munshiji summarising the main characteristics of this great judge, says of him: "He was more industrious than brilliant. His advocacy was different from that of either Sir Chimanlal's or Bhulabhai's. Full of dignity and solemn depth, it was ceaselessly absorbed in search of truth, dreaded

exaggeration and was terrified of mere brilliance. It had one sole object, to have justice from the Judge". These traits, we are told, became more and more confirmed after he became a Judge. Munshiji was once conducting an appeal before him. The trial judge had used some harsh words against the defendant's evidence and had characterised it as unreliable. Munshiji added his own by saying: "My Lord, the mildest term that can be used for this man is the one used by the learned judge of the trial court, "master-craftsman of the art of mendacity." Sir Lallubhai looked up and said: "Mr. Munshi, do you mean to say that there can be a stronger term than this?" Munshiji retorted: "My Lord, the resources of the English language are not so poor as not to provide a stronger term." The dread of strong terminology came forth in the Judge and out came the caution: "Oh no. I don't want to hear a stronger word. This is quite enough."

Sir Lallubhai's main contribution as a Judge lies in his well-considered judgments on questions of Hindu law. It is said that, on his being raised to the Bench, he commenced studying Sanskrit with the aid of a *Shastri* and studied the *Dharmashastras.* Munshiji had the opportunity of conducting several cases before him which involved certain important questions of Hindu law.

Bai Gulab v. *Jeevanlal* (24 Bom. L.R. 5) was one such case. Bai Gulab was a daughter by a Vaishya father and a Shudra mother. When she came of age the father ceased to care for her and a Bhatia lady took her under her wing and got her married to a watch-repairer. A week or so after the marriage Gulab left her husband who then filed a suit claiming conjugal rights. The case came up for hearing before Kajiji J. and Shri Bhulabhai appeared for the husband against Munshiji. The principal contention on behalf of the wife was that she was the daughter of a Shudra woman by a Vaishya, and therefore, a Shudra and that her marriage with a Vaishya being *anuloma* was prohibited by Hindu law. The judge immediately came on the Defence Counsel saying that in the event of his deciding that the marriage was bad, what was to happen to the poor wife? Having lived already with the plaintiff

for a time, who else would, in Hindu society, give her a wife's status? The case dragged on for two or three days and the judge asked Munshiji to persuade his client to settle. Meetings were arranged in Munshiji's chamber but Gulab remained as adamant as ever and instructed her counsel and attorney to go on with the case. The judge was informed of this and, as often happens, counsel became the butt of the judge's displeasure. Mr. Justice Kajiji decided against the defence contentions and held the marriage a valid one.

At 2-30 p.m. that afternoon the learned judge who was still disturbed by the refusal of Gulab to accept his suggestion of a compromise added that Gulab should forthwith go to her husband. Munshiji had anticipated this and was actually drawing up the grounds of appeal. When the judge finished, he got up and asked for time to appeal and in the meantime to stay the order. The judge would have none of it. The defence asked for one day. Still the judge refused. Ultimately he gave one hour in which to get the stay order from the Appeal Court. Munshiji immediately rushed to Chief Justice McLeod's chamber, narrated the facts and told him that there was not enough time to have them typed. The Chief Justice asked Munshiji to apply at 3-30 p.m. that day and asked him to submit the hand-written memo of appeal. Sir Thomas Strangman opposed him in the appeal court. The Chief Justice asked: "Where the marriage itself is challenged, how can I allow the decree to be executed?", and the stay order was granted.

The appeal came on for hearing before MacLeod C. J. and Sir Lallubhai. Shri Jinnah appeared for the husband. As soon as Munshiji opened, MacLeod C. J. opened Mulla's Hindu Law and started, as was usual with him, to cut the matter short. But Sir Lallubhai was already interested in the case and showed himself against any such attempts to cut the matter short. The question of *anuloma* marriage was a vital question and for two days Sir Lallubhai and Munshiji were absorbed in the mysteries of *Mitakshara, Mayukha* and other *Dharmashastras.* Sir Lallubhai at last made the appellant admit that the *anuloma* marriage was not one prohibited by Hindu

law. This decision has still remained undisturbed as a landmark in the development of Hindu law.

A rich Hindu fell ill in the house of a nayakin and died there after a few days. The nayakin Nagubai claimed to be the *avaruddha stree* of the deceased and filed a suit for maintenance against the widow and children of the deceased. The case was heard in the trial court by Mr. Justice Kanga. Munshiji, who was for the defendants, *inter alia,* contended that the deceased had relations with others also, apart from the plaintiff and that the defendants had no knowledge whether the plaintiff was a permanent or a temporary concubine. The trial judge decided against the defendants and the suit went up to the appeal court, consisting of Sir Lallubhai, who was then acting as the Chief Justice, and Mr. Justice Crump. For the appellants Munshiji argued that although the Hindu shastras recognised the right of an *avaruddha stree* to maintenance and placed her on a footing analogous to a married woman, a mere concubine is not recognised and that in order to be so entitled the concubine must have attained the status of *avaruddha. stree* i.e., she must have been openly kept and accepted by the deceased's family. A concubine kept in a hole and corner manner is not the *avaruddha stree* contemplated by the Hindu law. Sir Lallubhai got interested in this argument and began to cite the ancient texts which even the counsel had not produced. The acting Chief Justice argued that if that was not the position, then it would be impossible for the legal representatives of the deceased to prove that the concubine was not a permanent or an exclusively kept mistress. Sir Lallubhai held this argument to be valid and reversed the trial court judgment (*Moghibai* v. *Nagubai* 24 Bom. L.R. 1009).

Nagubai took her case to the Privy Council where. Lord Darling favoured a commonsense rather than a merely scriptural view. "Would the family members in this modern world accept and recognise such a concubine?" he enquired and reversed the decision of the Appellate Court (*Nagubai* v. *Moghibai* 53 I.A. 1553). From the point of view of the surviving relations of the deceased, perhaps the point of view of Sir Lallubhai, though involving a stricter interpretation of the law, was cor-

rect as, unless recognition of the concubine by the deceased's family was not made a necessary ingredient, it is possible that such relations may become the victims of false litigations and of consequent injustice. Looking to the large number of suits that have been and are still being filed taking advantage of the Privy Council decision, it is necessary that the entire legal position of an *avaruddha stree* should be thoroughly reviewed.

During the last year of the first World War there was a great spate of speculation in Japanese textiles. In October-November, 1918, certain groups of merchants in Bombay got themselves heavily involved in such dealings and more particularly in what was known as the Nine Dragon Japanese Longcloth. There was a strong belief that the World War would still continue for another couple of years, with the result that every day marked big fluctuations in prices. Thousands of bales went from hand to hand and merchants every day counted lacs of rupees as profits, all of course, on paper. The bales were nowhere to be seen in the market, and no one intended or thought of giving or taking any delivery.

In November 1918 the war came to a sudden end and the rates tumbled down equally suddenly. Purchasers refused to take delivery and a crop of suit for damages for breach of contract came to be filed. From the meagre figure of 1,200 suits a year in the High Court the number rose to 5,000 or more. Munshiji, though comparatively a junior, had by then made his name both as a draftsman and as a dependable junior and he got a fairly large chunk out of the new crop. Apart from the usual court work, he was able, on an average, to dispose of four to five pleadings a day. The High Court premises were buzzing with litigants and commercial disputes of almost every kind involving a variety of legal points. All these commercial suits came on for hearing in 1920. Chief Justice MacLeod, known for his quick disposal of matters, used to finish on an average fifteen to twenty of these commercial suits, most of which, instead of being thrashed out to a final judgment, used to be compromised. Shri Bhulabhai and Sir Jamshedji Kanga invariably appeared against each other in most of these matters.

In the meanwhile, Sir Jamshedji was raised to the Bench and his junior, Shri Harilal Kania, now the Hon'ble Sir Harilal Kania, a judge of the Federal Court, joined Shri Bhulabhai and his group of juniors. In the beginning of 1921 the Chief Justice, in order to dispose of the arrears which had accumulated, appointed seven judges to sit on the original side in place of the two or three until then. Upto this time the *holding* system prevalent in England was also accepted here as a necessary concomitant of the dual system and the English traditions of the Bar. Shri Bhulabhai was unceasingly in demand, particularly after Sir Jamshedji had gone to the Bench, and every evening briefs used to be collected in his chamber in increasing numbers. Not being able to cope with the work he used to ask his juniors to *hold* briefs for him and work them out in the various courts while he himself attended one court and supervised and directed the other courts.

At first the manner in which this *holding* system was being worked, though contrary to the fashion in which it was handled in England, was not noticed so long as there were only two or three courts on the Original Side. With the increase of courts the work of all the courts collected in one chamber and a systematic monopoly of the entire work was being accomplished.

The rest of the members of the bar grew restive and their complaint culminated in what Munshiji called the 'Trial of the Seven Bishops'. A Committee of inquiry was set up with Sir Thomas Strangman, Shri Bahadurji and Shri H. C. Coyaji. The trial ultimately ended in the acquittal of the seven members and with the end of the trial vanished tragically the *holding* system which, when worked in its true spirit, had been responsbile for turning out junior members as worthy successors to their more experienced seniors. There is no doubt that the end of the *holding* system has resulted in the loss of the requisite training of the new members of the Bar. It has also resulted to a large degree, in the disintegration of the Bar. I feel that, had the *holding* system not been waylaid and abolished, the attempts of the new democracy now in vogue in Bombay Province could not have successfully laid its hands on the age-old system of Advocate and Attorneys as it is about to do, and

the entirety of the present-day system of administration of justice would have been preserved. Had the bar as a whole maintained its strength, the system would have survived these assaults on it.

Shri Manchershaw, of Messrs. Minocheher Manchershaw and Hiralal, is in many respects an extraordinary attorney. Whenever he takes a matter in hand the mere pecuniary aspect of it becomes immaterial. Complete preparation on all factual aspects of the matter, including even investigation of questions of law and cross-examination, are made and when the brief is delivered the counsel always feels that nothing is left out. Since 1915-16 he had a prediliction for Munshiji, and in many a matter he had taken the assistance of the young Advocate and tested his faculties. Since then Shri Manchershaw has evinced in Munshiji and his affairs not merely a friendly but also a paternal interest. When Munshiji prepared himself in 1930-31 to go to jail, tears came in the eyes of this old Solicitor. Recently I myself came in touch with Shri Manchershaw in certain personal matters of Munshiji, and I perceived that in spite of old age the same paternal feeling for Munshiji, the same love for detail and partiality for precision were still there.

Raja Bahadur Shivlal Motilal was a great businessman and a multi-millionaire of the Nizam Hyderabad. He died leaving behind him a son, R. B. Bansilal, and several grandsons. Disputes arose between R. B. Bansilal and his two sons over the partition of the joint family property. Shri Manchershaw was attending to this case on behalf of R. B. Bansilal's minor sons. In 1922 this great case came up for hearing before Pratt J. and Shri Jinnah and Shri Bhulabhai appeared for the plaintiffs, sons of R. B. Bansilal. Sir Jamshedji Kanga appeared for Raja Bahadur Bansilal. Shri Manchershaw briefed Munshiji with Shri Kania, as the junior counsel.

The main point involved in the suit was whether a Hindu father had the right to separate only one or more sons without severing the joint status between himself and his other sons. It was contended for the plaintiff that the father had no right to effect such a partial partition as regards some of his sons but that the partition would be a total partition between him and all

his sons. Sir Jamshedji, who argued for a few hours, relied mostly on case law. Prof. Gharpure, one of the well-known authorities on *Dharmashatras*, was helping the opposite side. Unknown to Shri Manchershaw, Munshiji had been calling a *shastri* at his residence and with his help was going through the original texts. The points involved in the case were interesting and the research they entailed was laborious although now that they are settled by decisions, they do not arouse any curiosity. From the point of view of a legal practitioner, the action was still then the heaviest and the parties being well-known residents of Bombay, became a *casus celebre* of the time. It was also the most well-paid case of the time and became a turning point in the history of the Bombay lawyers in increasing the scale of fees paid to the counsel on the original side. Shri Jinnah and Shri Bhulabhai, who appeared for the plaintiff, contended that the father had no right to effect a partial partition as regards only some of his sons. When the appearances of some dozen counsel were mentioned, Mr. Justice Pratt, who heard the case, exclaimed: 'Where is the rest of the Bar?''

After a short opening Shri Jinnah sat down and Sir Jamshedji Kanga appearing for the father, Raja Bahadur Bansilal, in his address dealt on the legal aspects of the case mostly citing the decided cases. Then came Munshiji's turn. Tracing the father's right form the Vedic texts down to the *Mayukha*, he took the Judge step by step through the complicated labyrinth of citations. In the intensity of the argument he forgot his juniority and the diffidence from which he then used to suffer and evolved before the impressed Court a clear and elaborate argument. On the second day when he sat down it was apparent that both the Court and the spectators were convinced that the performance was something out of the ordinary. Shri Manchershaw, who all the time was seated opposite to his counsel, was amazed at the arguments evolved by him and which did not form part of his observations; he was overjoyed at the feat of his favourite. Sir Jamshedji, who always delights in an able exposition of law by his juniors, was effusive in his appreciation. Munshiji's own *guru* shook his pupil's hands. Unfortunately,

the suit was settled and did not find its place in the Law Reports.

This case was indeed a landmark in Munshiji's career as a practitioner and it brought him up immediately from his place as the leader of the Junior Bar into the Select Group of Seniors, besides bringing him a rich harvest of fees. The case also focussed the attention of several firms of solicitors who were not until then briefing him too often, with the result that the evenings became day by day busier and busier with conferences and consultations.

Another important and equally complicated case which Munshiji attended during this period was a misfeasance summons against the directors of the Anglo-India Steam Navigation Co., Ltd. Sir Jamshedji appeared with Shri Bhulabhai for the liquidator and Sir Chimanlal, Shri V. F. Taraporevala and Munshiji appeared separately for one or the other directors. Once again, Shri Manchershaw was instructing Munshiji. One of the interesting aspects of the case was that one of the Directors of the Company was Mr. Justice Kajiji, then on the Bench. The case lasted for a month and a half.

During the pendency of the case Mrs. Munshi fell seriously ill and Munshiji had to conduct the case under great mental strain. As the case progressed, the condition of Mrs. Munshi became worse and it reached a critical stage about the time that his turn came to address the Court. The last five or six days before the actual addresses were over, were almost terrible. As Mrs. Munshi throughout the period was lying unconscious, and the doctors were reporting her to be sinking, the case became so complicated that Munshiji could not even think of giving it up or leave it to some one else. It was in that poignant state of mind that Munshiji had to address the Court for four days and as soon as he finished his address he went straight to his dying wife. Two days later, the worst happened, and Mrs. Munshi breathed her last.

Those who know the intense preparation that is necessary in a case of this character will realise that with a dying patient in the house Munshiji must have had very little time to marshall the facts of such a lengthy matter and prepare the requisite arguments. By this time, however, he had begun to

evolve a system of preparation of a case in which he has now completely become a master. Now, before the case opens, all that Munshiji generally does and masters are the pleadings of the case and a very meagre sketch of the essential facts involved in the case, unless of course he is required to open the case on the basis of complicated facts. Peculiar though the system is to himself, many a solicitor and client has been helpless, believing that their counsel is not himself aware of all the data and materials of the case. As the case proceeds Munshiji takes up a notebook and this gets written over with analysis of the various points, the facts and the propositions of law, which he in his turn thinks he will have to submit to the court. All this is done while the case proceeds. He has got into the habit of thus completing his preparation in instalments, while at the same time he attends to the counsel on the other side and follows the evidence that is led by the opposite side. He has mastered the habit of taking down the full notes of evidence, but he takes down only important pieces of evidence which, almost in an automatic fashion, get marshalled in the note book in a logical and invariably in a chronological form.

When his turn to cross-examine a witness or to deliver the address arrives, the note is ready, but to a stranger it looks so hopelessly arranged that it is more a mess than a sketch of a lucid argument. No one except himself can produce any coherence out of it. To him, however, all that is necessary is to number the different notes into a logical order by a blue or red pencil. Those who have seen him closely at work have realised by now that this special method of preparation has enabled him to do full justice to the most complicated cases without his having to sit up late hours for preparing his briefs. Incidentally, on account of this matter, a heavy brief does not put any extreme strain upon his health which otherwise has remained in a delicate state for the last several years, and it saves considerable time even in the midst of heavy cases for him to indulge in many activities, literary as well as others.

One of the heavy cases which during this period put his knowledge and familiarity of book-keeping and accounts to a severe test was the famous case of Chand Chhap Kesar. A very

large business in saffrons was being conducted by an old widow who rarely made any move in her business without consulting Shri Jamietram, solicitor. Her muccadam who had been instructed to take delivery of certain cases of saffron which had arrived from Spain, got some papers signed by the old lady for the purpose of taking delivery of the cases from the Port Trust authorities. When the cases were demanded by the Lady's firm, the muccadam alleged that those cases were pledged with him to secure the repayment of Rs. 20,000 lent and advanced by him to the firm. In support of his allegation the muccadam produced a document signed by the lady. It turned out to be an instrument of pledge. The lady was practically illiterate and did not exactly know the kind of document which she had passed in favour of the muccadam. The muccadam's books, which were produced in the court, pointed to the fact that he had given a loan of Rs. 20,000. Munshiji appeared for the widow, challenged the documents as being a forgery in as much as the body of the document had been written on the blank space kept in the paper signed by the widow.

Sir Thomas Strangman and Shri Bhulabhai who led Munshiji had already taken a pessimistic view of the case. His junior, however, took a different view of the matter and shared Shri Jamietram's opinion that the widow had on the whole a fair chance of success. The suit went on almost for a fortnight and in the absence of Shri Bhulabhai, Munshiji had to conduct it. In order to support his theory of having made the advance the muccadam produced his books of account. On a first examination the books appeared to be in perfect order but on a closer scrutiny Munshiji began to discover that an elaborate set of entries had been made in order to provide therein the necessary balance of Rs. 20,000. A more detailed inquiry for two or three days disclosed at last the key. Mr. Justice Crump who heard the case followed the arguments in regard to the books with a great deal of patience. It was a matter of touch and go and ultimately the muccadam's action was dismissed. The dismissal was a joint triumph of Munshiji and Jamietram who had taken the decision of proceeding with the suit notwithstanding the adverse opinion of the seniors.

As expected, the muccadam went into appeal. Shri Bhulabhai appeared this time for the widow and led Munshiji. Convinced as he was that his client had no case, it was difficult to shake him from his view of the account books. Within a couple of hours the appeal Court reversed the trial Court's judgment.

The widow went to the Privy Council, where her counsel, applying the searchlight which those entries justly deserved, addressed that august body on those entries for a number of days. At last the Privy Council upheld the view taken by the Trial Judge and Munshiji, and the decree of the appeal Court was consequently reversed. By a curious coincidence, Chief Justice McLeod who presided over the appeal Court here happened to be present in the Privy Council and actually witnessed the reversal of his hasty judgment. Never was Shri Jamietram so full of joy at the performance of the young counsel whom he had brought to the Bar.

The method of presenting a case in a strictly chronological order and of propounding definite propositions has been Munshiji's favourite method. Chronology, according to him, unravels many a difficult situation and when once seemingly contradictory facts are arranged strictly in this manner, in a logical and coherent order the facts prove themselves. Chief Justice Martin was a lover of such orderliness in a counsel's address. He loved to hear elaborate arguments and Munshiji loved to present them and consequently he became almost a constant fixture in the Court of Martin C. J. appearing in several heavy cases which the judge was delighted to call 'Chancery Actions.'

Mr. Justice Beaman had started the fashion of calling the Teji-mandi transactions as wagering contracts. In many a case that Munshiji appeared he had felt that Beaman J's temperamental horror of the Marwari businessmen had precluded him from appreciating the true nature of Teji-mandi. The case of *Manubhai* vs. *Keshavji* (24 Bom. L. R. 60) which came up before Mr. Justice Kincaid gave him the chance. The judge luckily was free from any prepossession about this particular kind of commercial transaction. The judge had to be taken, for weeks together, to detailed evidence and a labyrinth

of account books in order to combat the prevailing notion that these contracts were by their nature wagering.

If the judge had no prejudices against this type of contract, he was to a certain extent a peculiar man to tackle. He looked upon the Court work as more or less an unavoidable nuisance. He had cultivated an intense fascination for Maratha History and Hindu Gods and loved to write about them. He used to take down every conceivable type of evidence without so much as applying his mind to it and only made a point of hearing Counsel's arguments with absorbed attention at the end. Whoever presented his case at this stage in a lucid and systematic fashion enabling the judge to produce a coherent and readable judgment, was more often than not likely to succeed. Munshiji's style of propounding propositions and his adherance to chronology were very useful to this judge and enabled Munshiji to be a fixture in this Court for some time.

After this Munshiji began to be briefed in a series of linseed cases and these cases came up before Mr. Justice Taraporewala. In many of these commercial cases Munshiji was generally opposed by Shri Kania, (now Sir Harilal). Shri Kania had established by this time a reputation for a keen appreciation of both accounts and the intricacies of commercial transactions which were then coming up for judicial decisions in the courts. While these cases were going on, Munshiji used to sit down with the merchants for hours on end and get them to explain to him the various aspects of their transactions. In one of these cases, the learned judge hearing it set his face against the custom which Munshiji was trying to prove. No sooner a witness's examination-in-chief was over than the judge would tuck up his sleeve, turn fiercely to the witness and put a series of questions. The brokers, unaccustomed to this kind of judicial ordeal, completely broke down and started saying 'yes' to everything that they were asked. Even the judge felt that there was something wrong and asked a witness severely: "Why do you say 'yes' to everything that I ask?" The witness frankly replied: 'My Lord, how can I say 'no' to *Sarkar?*" The judge's cross-examination destroyed the structure the minute a counsel raised it. Ever since Munshiji handled these

cases he has been in the habit of having a personal contact with the client wherever complicated facts are involved. Once he undertakes a case he warms himself up to such an extent that he must erect the fabric of his case not by a secondhand typed brief but by a living touch with the man himself.

Between the years 1919-1930 there was scarcely a branch of law with which Munshiji had had not to deal. It was during these years that he came to be acknowledged as one of the most reliable counsel for drafting pleadings. Drafting is an art which can only be mastered, like all other arts, by constant practice and hard industry. Curiously, however, drafting has always remained an undervalued piece of work though in many a case it throws on the drafting counsel responsibility until the matter is finally heard and disposed of. Such an art can only be preserved and maintained in its efficiency while the dual system persists.

Even when a student, Munshiji was busy collecting precedents of eminent counsels like Inverarity, Scott and others. The early training which he had with Shri Bhulabhai, who was at the time the ablest draftsman at the Bar, gave him both the practical experience and the capacity to give a case a perfect shape at the earliest possible moment. Between 1919-1922, a period of great post-war boom in litigation, Munshiji had to do often four or five pleadings a day. While *devilling* with Shri Bhulabhai, Munshiji tried to follow for his pleadings the language of Daniel's *Chancery Practice*, Roscoe's *Evidence in Civil Actions* and Seton on *Orders and Decrees.* Such was his study of these works that he can today lay his finger immediately on the requisite paragraph at a given moment. At all times Munshiji has been a lover of the beauty of phrases and. wherever possible, he tries to use in his pleadings a fine phrase from a classical law book or a dictum of some great judge. Often, he would, for the purpose of his pleading, find out the nearest possible case from the decisions of the Privy Council or the House of Lords and reproduce the identical phraseology.

Later on Munshiji maintained a select collection of about 300 or 400 of his own drafts. When he went to jail in the 1930-31 movement, the volume made ready with so much care

was lost. Mr. Justice Bhagvati, himself a draftsman of great ability, when elevated to the Bench reminded Munshiji that when *devilling* in the Chamber, he had copied out the collection in his own handwriting and preserved it in a well-bound volume. That volume is still intact.

Munshiji has always held that to be a good draftsman is a *sine qua non* for being a clear-headed lawyer and has always insisted on his juniors and *devils* the necessity of learning the art of draftsmanship first.

Unlike as in his literary work, Munshiji always insists upon *using* a uniform phraseology in his pleadings and generally entertains a horror for passive voice and complicated sentences. An averment or a prayer in a plaint for a mortgage suit prescribed by the authorities like Buller and Leake is to him as inflexibly sacrosanct as a Vedic verse. This uniformity of language he even exacts form his juniors and *devils* with the result that when his pleadings are drafted by one of his *devils* he can adopt them as his own with suitable variations. In recent..years he has had to do some very complicated pleadings going over some time nearly to a hundred paragraphs.

One of the most elaborate he did in recent time was a written statement for a party in Hyderabad State which went into nearly ninety pages. The draft was ultimately sent to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru for settling and he approved it with only a few minor corrections. From the point of view of sheer artistry, Munshiji regards two of his plaints as his best efforts, one was the plaint in the case of *Bansilal Abhuchand* vs. *Sir Manekji Dadabhoy,* an action for the dissolution of partnership between the sons of the famous Central Provinces industrial magnet Sir Kasturchand Daga and Sir Manekji. That case became a first class *casus celebre* in the Central Provinces both by reason of its volume and the personalities involved. At the time of the hearing of the case Shri C. K. Daphtary, now the Advocate-General of Bombay, and myself were briefed for the Dagas and between us two we cross-examined Sir Manekji for not less than four weeks. In the beginning, the plaintiffs in that case had in their possession very few material documents as the management of the partnership had for more than forty

years remained entirely in the hands of the defendant. Munshiji happened to be at Matheran and it was there that, with the scanty materials produced before him, he drafted the plaint. I remember vividly how on his return he was full of enthusiasm for this draft. It was later on settled by Shri M. C. Setalvad and between them they had produced a plaint as perfect as one could expect in the circumstances. The plaint was so flexible in language and shape that when evidence was led it could stand the strain of a whole forest of complicated facts. The other pleading was a plaint for a suit to be filed in the Sholapur Court by a minor for setting aside an alienation by a Hindu father of a famous estate in Sholapur known as the 'Warad estate' and setting aside of certain debentures issued by a Financing company floated for purposes which can hardly be called legitimate. The suit was transferred to the Bombay High Court and as coincidence would have it, I had to appear in this suit too for one of the parties. Ultimately, the suit ended in a compromise decree.

In 1936 one of the most interesting cases, that Munshiji was briefed in, related to the controversy about the famous temple of Kesaryaji in Udaipur State. In the early part of the 19th century the flagstaff of this temple had fallen down and the Swetambar Jains who held a certain amount of power in the state had put up a new flagstaff. After about a century that flagstaff too broke down. Dhulev, a village in the State, where the temple is situate happens to be a Digambar village. In recent years the Swetambars had lost much of their original power and influence and the Digambars now came forward insisting on exercising their privilege of putting up their own flagstaff. The State appointed a committee of inquiry to scrutinize the rival contentions. In the meantime, as the flag must fly, the State put up its own. Originally, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Shri Jinnah appeared for the rival parties. Some time after, however, they returned their respective briefs. The Swetambars instructed Shri M. C. Setalvad and for Digambars appeared Munshiji. The main question in the Inquiry was as to who had founded the famous temple.

The Inquiry involved a close study of several Jain *shastras*, the nature of the temple's architecture, pedigrees of some of the more important jain *sadhus* and a number of inscriptions which devout pilgrims had inscribed on the temple walls during the last several hundred years. Shri Setalvad had the advantage of being ably assisted by that famous Jain scholar, Muni Jinvijayji, who coincidently now is the Director of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, an institution which owes almost everything to Munshiji's efforts. Munshiji, in his turn revelled in the research, partly historical and partly legal, that he had to undertake in order to do justice to his side. Udaipur until then had been a sealed book to him. Its ancient atmosphere, together with the reminiscences of the great Pratap and his warriors and the complete isolation of the State from the modern world, entirely enraptured him.

The most interesting part in the Inquiry was the one taken by the doves. Udaipur at that time had hardly any arrangement for a court. Out of deference to the Bombay lawyers the State put up a temporary Court in the State Museum. The doves of the Museum were as high pedigreed and as unflinching in courage as the Rajput soldiers. While the case was going on, they would come in every few minutes into the Court and perch themselves on one or the other hangers and continue to coo with unabashed insistence. As soon as they started their chorus the counsel would stop in the middle of his argument and the State's servants would rush in with long poles to drive out these unwanted guests. It was regarded sacrilegious to injure the doves so that the servant could only keep on shooing at the doves all the time, keeping them at a respectable distance. Some minutes would pass thus in driving them out and the legal arguments would be resumed. After a short interval, the whole episode would be repeated.

During the course of the Inquiry, the Counsel on both sides visited the famous temple in order to find out whether the innumerable images in the temple were carved naked or dressed up with clothes. The Inquiry thus went on for a considerable time. To those who heard him, Munshiji's performance both as a legal as well as a historical argument appeared

to be one of his best performances. Even Muni Jinvijayaji who was taking part in the enquiry against Munshiji's clients admitted that Munshiji's interpretation of the Jaini *Shastras* was a brilliant one. The Civilian member of the Inquiry Committee, complimented Munshiji heartily and before he left for England informed Munshiji that the Committee had decided in his favour.

The Report of the Committee was at last submitted to the State. In the meantime, the then Prime Minister died and with his death the report was shelved. The State flag has been still flying on the flagstaff notwithstanding the Inquiry and the Report. Both the Digambars and the Swetambars have been waiting to hear the contents of the Report and to see action taken thereon. But the State has managed to forget all about it. The only result of the disputes between the two sects appears to be the privilege that the Jain community had to spend lakhs of rupees to see a kind of gladiatorial fight between their prominent counsel to their full and utter satisfaction.

About the year 1939 the new Income Tax Act with the establishment of Income Tax Tribunals opened out a new field for Munshiji's talents. The new tribunals though limited in scope, have undoubtedly been able to check the vagaries of the Income Tax Department. This was a new kind of litigation specially suitable to the genius of Munshiji. From the time that the new tribunals came into being, he began to appear in a large number of Income Tax cases, and became almost a fixture in one or the other tribunals, for months at a stretch. A considerable part of his practice, for some months, was to prepare foolproof schemes against the rigid provisions of the Act.

From about the year 1940 Munshiji's work began to be more specialised and in consequence he became less available for the usual litigation in the High Court. He began to acquire a reputation on an all-India scale and was found to be roaming on professional work practically throughout the country.

The year 1942 and the 'Quit India' Movement, entailed as it did a new crop of Defence of India litigations and the controversies arising out of a number of new Ordinances, threw upon Munshiji a tremendous burden of defending those who had

taken part in the movement. It became a veritable crusade in the defence of personal liberty and political rights. In and after 1942 he was concerned in a series of sensational cases all throughout the country in most of which he brought out not only his skill as a lawyer but often an element of smashing surprise. One of the first of these cases was in connection with the warrant of arrest issued by the Allahabad High Court against Mr. B. G. Horniman, the famous editor of the *Bombay* Sentinel, for contempt of Court. Munshiji's contention was that the Allahabad High Court had no jurisdiction to issue such a warrant for contempt in other provinces. Evidently, nobody had until then tried to issue such a warrant and when this contention was placed before the Appellate Bench of the Bombay High Court it took every one concerned by total surprise. The High Court decided in favour of Munshiji's contention and the judgment created quite a sensation in the country. When the warrant was ultimately returned unexecuted it was reported that one of the judges of the Allahabad High Court got so exasperated that he is said to have exclaimed "We shall take action against Mr. Horniman when he comes to United Provinces." Horniman with his characteristic promptness, retorted in the *Bombay Sentinel* that the Allahabad High Court would have to wait long before they got him to the United Provinces.

Another case of an equally sensational character in which Munshiji came to be briefed was the famous contempt case which more popularly came to be known as the *Tribune* Contempt Case. The case was heard by the full bench of the Lahore High Court consisting of the Chief Justice Sir Trevor Harris, Mr. Justice Munir and Mr. Justice Teja Singh. Munshiji appeared with several leaders of the Lahore Bar for the Respondents, while the Crown was represented by Shri Sleem, the Advocate-General of the Lahore High Court.

The charges of contempt against the Respondents fell under three headings:—(1) for having published comments on the arrest of Shri A. C. Bali under the heading "Arrest made on flimsy grounds" in the issue of the *Tribune* of 6th September 1943, (2) for having published the proceedings of the hearing of the *Habeas Corpus* petition filed by Shri P. L. Sondhi in

the Lahore High Court for the production of Shri Bali in the Court to be dealt with in accordance with the law and to which objection was taken, for having published the petition *in extenso* as also for having published observations attributed to Mr. Justice Munir and the remark of Shri Anand, Advocate, that the arrest of Shri Bali was illegal, improper and *mala fide*, and (3) for having published the news item regarding the transfer application in Mr. Justice Munir's Court under the heading "Lawyer insulted".

While Munshiji was quoting certain precedents in order to establish the point that the contempt proceedings should be very thriftily instituted; the Chief Justice wanted to refer to some particular book. He was, however, told that the Punjab High Court Library had only one book, which made him reply that in Patna from where he had recently come the seven judges of that High Court had seven sets. Munshiji maliciously remarked:

> "But the Punjab is a rich Province."
>
> Chief Justice: "But that is not reflected in our Library.
>
> Munshiji: May be your Lordships' wisdom is not expected to require reference to books.

Mr. Justice Munir whose remarks in the Court had been published in the *Tribune* asked Munshiji as to why comments of the judge should have been reproduced and that the judgement, the only safe thing was to be published by the newspaper and "whatever else was published was a dangerous stuff."

> Munshiji: If your Lordship's view is accepted, I must respectfully submit that it would mean the jeopardising the liberty of the whole press. Justice is not such a cloistered virtue that it cannot be criticised.
>
> Justice Munir: Justice is not a handmaid of journalists.

To Munshiji's argument that contempt proceedings ought to be sparingly used, Chief Justice remarked, "I concede that judges must not be too sensitive."

Munshiji: A mere breeze, My Lords, should not turn the scales of justice.

The main question as pointed out by the Chief Justice was whether the publication actually interfered with the cause of justice to which Mr. Justice Munir stated that Mr. Henderson might have been affected by the propaganda that was started against him in newspapers.

Chief Justice: But that is surely not contempt of Court.

Munshiji: Editors are certainly entitled to criticise various matters which are not pending before the Court.

Munir J: But an editor is not a judge.

Chief Justice: Surely an editor has a right of comment.

The full bench delivered its judgment accepting the contentions of the respondents but Mr. Justice Munir delivered a judgment dissenting from the judgment of the Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Teja Singh. Apart from the case (reported in A.I.R. (1943) Lahore p. 329) creating a sensation at the time, it was an important event in as much as the judgment laid down in full details the principles covering the rights of a journalist regarding the printing and publishing of the news items.

Sir Manohar Lal, the Ex-Finance Minister of the Punjab, and one of the trustees of the *Tribune,* happened to be Munshiji's host, when he went to Lahore for this case. Sir Manohar Lal had not seen Munshiji for a long time and when Munshiji was about to start for the Court he was considerably surprised at the Bombay lawyer being dressed in dhoti, khaddar coat and a Gandhi cap. Hesitatingly, Sir Manohar Lal remarked whether Munshiji would insist upon going to the Court in his dhoti and khadi cap. Munshiji pointed out that for the last several years he always did so. Sir Tekchand Bakshi, who happened to be present there, said that under some circular issued by the Lahore High Court no one with a khadi cap on, was permitted in the Court premises. Munshiji replied that if any objection was taken to his headgear he would request the Court to give some time to his clients to enable them to brief another counsel whose headgear was more palatable to the High Court than his, and that he would then withdraw from the case. The whole bar of the Lahore High Court was in a state of exultation at

Munshiji's bringing the Gandhi cap within the court premises. It is well known that after his rejoining the Bar on the resignation of the Congress Ministry in 1939, Munshiji had refused to get into the European dress in court.

The *Habeas Corpus* petition of Shri Jai Prakash Narain was another sensational brief that Munshiji took up during this critical period. The application was heard before a Division Bench of the Lahore High Court consisting of the Chief Justice Sir Trevor Harris and Mr. Justice Abdul Rehman. Shri Jai Prakash Narain had been originally detained under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules. When a *Habeas Corpus* application on his behalf was filed by Shri H. R. Pardiwala of the Bombay Bar, the Lahore Police arrested Shri Pardiwala himself on the very day he filed his client's petition. The Government of the Punjab, perhaps finding that it could not oppose the petition, brought to its assistance the old and obsolete Regulation III of 1818 and declared Shri Jai Praksh Narain a state prisoner. This took away the jurisdiction of the Court to interfere in the case.

Arising out of this application was the case of Shri Pardiwala who as I have already stated had gone to Lahore with Munshiji's own personal notes on Shri Jeewanlal Kapur of the Lahore High Court and other friends to file the *Habeas Corpus* petition on behalf of Shri Jai Prakash Narain. After the petition was filed and as Shri Pardiwala came out of Court premises he was arrested and detained for about three days in jail by the Lahore Police under harassing conditions. This created a first class scandal throughout the whole country.

While Munshiji was going to Lahore for arguing the case of Shri Jai Prakash Narain he realised that there was no case to argue and in fact he declined to proceed to Lahore. Shri Pardiwala and some friends, however, wanted to go on with the case even if for no other purpose than to submit that there was no case. Munshiji drafted a petition against the D.I.G., C.I.D., of the Punjab and the Superintendent of C.I.D. as also the Inspector for arresting Shri Pardiwala while discharging his duty and withholding his *Habeas Corpus* petition from the High Court of Lahore.

When Munshiji went to the Lahore High Court he applied for a rule of Contempt against the three officers mentioned in the petition drafted by him in the train. This surprising move on Munshiji's part fell like a bombshell. The C.I.D. section of the Punjab had at that time managed to acquire a sinister reputation.

It is surprising how the mighty Punjab Police of the time treated the application as joke. When Munshiji went again to argue the application, all the three officers concerned did not care to remain present in Court. When the question arose as to when Shri Pardiwala's petition to the Court was dated, the Advocate General stated that he would make inquiries from the second Respondent, Robinson. Munshiji promptly drew the court's attetion to the offensive attitude of the three Respondents, in not being present in a quasi-criminal case. The Chief Justice was annoyed and the three officers were immediately summoned. As soon as they arrived they instructed their Counsel to say that the petition had been destroyed. Fortunately, Shri Pardiwala had all throughout maintained that he had submitted his *Habeas Corpus* application on a particualr date.

The Court then gave liberty to Munshiji to ask any questions he liked to these officers. Superintendent Robinson who was more or less regarded as a power in Lahore, had never before in his life gon through the experience of being cross-examined on his own conduct.

Munshiji: You had the petition of *Habeas Corpus* and the letter addressed to your superior, the D.I.G.

Answer: Yes.

Question: You tore up both the petition and the letter.

A. Yes.

Q: For how many years have you been in the Police Force?

(The Superintendent gave the number).

Q: Is it the practice in the Punjab Police Force for a subordinate officer to tear off the letters addressed to his superior?

The Superintendent tried to evade the question but Munshiji insisted on his reply and the Chief Justice who had noted the not

too humble attitude of the officer registered a stern warning to the witness. The question was again asked and the answer was "No. It was not."

> Q: Is it not a rule of the Police Force that every letter addressed to your superior must be forwarded to him?
> A: Yes.
> Q: Why did you tear off the letter to the D.I.G.?

The Superintendent could simply mutter "I think I was foolish."

The Superintendent and the Inspector were ordered to pay Rs. 50 and the Court gave a stern warning to the Police not to trifle with the petitions made by detenues to the High Court. On the other charge it was held that Shri Pardiwala at the time he was arrested was discharging his duty as counsel.

The case of Shri Pardiwala created quite a furore in the Punjab and the Police felt extremely crestfallen. The Superintendent was soon thereafter transferred from Lahore.

Shri Shiva Kumar Shastri, Barrister-at-law of the Lahore High Court, writing his impressions of Munshiji's first appearance in the High Court at Lahore says that the management of the *Tribune* after great deliberation had decided to brief Munshiji and that "by that decision something like history was made":

> Munshiji's name was not unfamiliar to us in the Punjab but he had done so many things in life that very few of us knew exactly the number or range of his activities and accomplishments. He is a lawyer of great standing, one would say. According to another, he was a novelist and a dramatist of great repute. A third would remark with some heat that the Munshiji he knew was a profound scholar in ancient Indian History and knew Sanskrit like the sages of old. A fourth would inquire meekly if the Munshiji that was coming over was not the one who had recently started the Akhand Hindustan movement and had actually been to Lahore in that connection. The first would nod his head wisely and say "why not?" He was also a very successful Home Minister in the late Congress Ministry in Bombay. Lawyers take to politics as a duck to water".

The second would say, "May be. But I still insist that Munshiji is primarily a novelist and a dramatist that is, a man of literature. He is famous as such in the literary circles of India. Perhaps he took to law and politics as a side line".

The first would say "Don't be absurd" (scandalised). "How can law be a side line? It is a jealous mistress. A lawyer may take interest in other things, but he cannot humanly specialise in any other thing. I should know. I am a lawyer".

The third would say "Nevertheless, I maintain that if Munshiji had specialised in anything it is in the history and culture of India. You can feel it by listening to him. I should know. I have talked to him".

The fourth would say, "Hasn't it occurred to anyone that there may be different savants answering to the same name? One may indeed be a specialist in history, the other might be a literary man and the third a lawyer".

The first would say, "Yes, that is a sensible view". The second would say, "But I thought we were talking about the same". The fourth would say, "How can you, if you keep on describing him differently?"

I was frequently coming across views of this kind. Naturally, I was interested to know more about a man who was being acclaimed on different sides as a specialist on more subjects than one. I read some of his public works in English. I also came to know some thing about his status in Gujarati literature.

For the moment, however, I and other members of the legal profession were concerned wholly with the fate of the impending proceedings against the *Tribune* and thought of Munshiji in no other capacity except that of an eminent lawyer on whose ability and advocacy we would have a chance to form a conclusion of our own.

The events I am recalling occurred about three years ago. Yet they are fresh in my mind. Watching Munshiji develop his arguments in Court, one felt at once that one was confronted with a powerful and fearless personality having a splendid intellect and a profoundly judicial mind. His grasp of facts seemed thorough, his background of law masterly, and his logic penetrating and irresistible. In a

firm yet restrained language he would formulate his points, rebuking where rebuke was called for and at times conceding with a grace that disarmed all opposition and dissent. He would put new light and clarity on old and well-established principles of law and the judicial decision on which they rested. There was no assertion of his which could be regarded merely as a debating point, and which could not be backed up by the strictest requirements of law and equity. He never said anything that was redundant or superfluous.

Therefore, whatever he said carried conviction.

The result was a triumph for Munshiji. Then the litigant public of the Punjab literally fell over him. Brief after brief came to him. He could not accept them all. Nevertheless his visits to Lahore became quite frequent. Each case in which he was briefed ended in his triumph and in victory for those that engaged him. His 'mofussil' practice was already extending beyond the confines of his own province. It seemed that the Punjab was also being annexed to that wide area.

The Executive and the Police of our Province began to sit up and take notice. They had got used to acting arbitrarily and with an insufferable arrogance. The absence of any vigorous protest on the one hand and the omnibus character of the Defence of India Rules on the other, had bred in them that absence of vigilence which leads inevitably to an abuse of authority. Two cases which Munshiji argued gave them a well-needed jolt from this complacency. In one, a Supreintendent of Police of the C.I.D. was found guilty of technical contempt because he had been responsible for withholding the transmission to the High Court of an *Habeas Corpus* petition by a detained person on the fatuous plea that, in his opinion, it had become infructuous. The Court held that it was no business of any official to form any conclusion about an application addressed to the Court. This case is reported in A.I.R. 1944, Lahore. 196.

The other case dealt with the ambit and scope of Rule 129 of the Defence of India Rules. For sometime this rule had become a kind of Santa Clause to the Police. It allowed them to detain a person on mere suspicion. Inevitably it had come to be misused. In this case (reported in A.I.R. 1944, Lahore, 373) the accused persons had been detained

under this rule not to ensure a more efficient prosecution of the war but to ensure a more efficient investigation into, and therefore a successful prosecution of their alleged crime of cheating. This was a gross abuse of Rule 129 and was held as such.

During this time I came to know Munshiji intimately. I soon discovered that behind the alert and eminent lawyer there was a deep thinker. That gave a special significance to his views on politics."

In August 1942 the villages of Chimur and Ramtak drew countrywide attention by certain Government officers having been killed by the mobs there and by their having indulged in arson and looting. Some of the tyrannical and harsh measures adopted by the C.P. Government immediately after these incidents made the situation in that Province more bitter than ever. Stories of rapes of women in these villages, looting of houses and various other persecutions by the soldiers, magistrates and police stationed there spread like wild fire, giving rise to a tremendous indignation throughout the country.

In Ramtek, a small town near Nagpur, the Government Treasury was looted by some members of the public. In Chimur some of the members of the public had taken out a Prabhat Ferri. The police as usual in those days had thought fit to stop it by a lathi charge. The upshot of such tactless behaviour on the part of the Police was only to increase the number of persons in the procession. Helter-skelter, the procession went to the Dak Bungalow where they had heard a Government officer had put up the previous evening. Unfortunately the officer concerned lost his presence of mind and seeing the crowd coming into the Bungalow and only with a view to scare the crowd away, shouted to his chaprasi to bring to him his gun. Then the tragedy happened. The crowd thought that the officer instead of listening to their complaint was about to shoot them down, and in their excitement fell on the officer who was about to run into another room. In the fight that took place the officer was done to death. Some of the police officers started shooting at the crowd and then began running for a

neighbouring town. The crowd followed in order to stop them from securing help. The policemen shot; the crowd disarmed some of the policemen and killed some others.

After the incident was over the village people realising what was to be the lot for them went out in all directions, fell a good number of trees from the road sides and blocked the roads leading to the village.

Almost identical events took place in Ashti, a prosperous town near Wardha with a population of about 3 to 4 thousand souls. Two or three days prior to the unfortunate events that happened there it was openly declared by the local people that a procession would be taken out in the morning. Express directions were issued to those intending to join the procession not to carry with them any lathi or stick. Evidence in the Ashti case made it clear beyond doubt that certain persons who came to Ashti from the neighbouring villages were actually asked to lay aside their sticks before entering the village.

When the procession started it was hardly composed of about three hundred persons shouting the usual Congress slogans and was preceded by a person holding aloft the tricolour flag. The *thana* had an Inspector of Police, a U.P. Hindu, who had kept himself and his five constables ready, armed with rifles. As the procession came near the compound gates the processionists who were till then quite orderly, were met by the Inspector. He took the leaders to the verandah to discuss. The leaders were trying to persuade the Inspector to permit them to hoist the national flag on the Police *thana*. While these talks were going on, one of the constables who were standing on two sides of the building all of a sudden started firing at the crowd which was squatting in the compound in a quiet and orderly fashion. A few of them were injured and a Muslim youth who happened to belong to the Nawab's family died.

The crowd dispersed immediately and the processionists out of sheer fright ran back to the town and that was the end of the procession. An hour or so later another crowd, this time much stronger, came back to the *thana* to fetch the dead and

the injured. The Inspector perhaps thought that the public would parade the town with the dead and the injured and believing that that might lead perhaps to more serious trouble immediately sent one of the constables for assistance from the nearby town, closed the compound gates and obstinately refused either to deliver the injured or to give any medical help to them. Some of the members of the crowd had by this time gone mad with fury owing to their comrades being either killed or injured as a result of the firing. Even in such wild fury some of them did not forget to go to the Police quarters and escort the wives and children of the Inspector and the constables safely to the village.

Even then nothing worse would perhaps have happened had the Inspector not run amuck. Going about here and there, shooting wildly at the crowd incessantly, he came near the compound gate where the greater part of the crowd was still standing and shot at a young man standing near the dispensary opposite. The crowd thought that others might likewise be shot at, fell on him and did him to death. Once the crowd had seen red, the rest of the constables too met with the same fate The constable who had first started firing in the morning on the peaceful crowd was found in the evening and he also met with the same fate as his colleagues.

The trials were scheduled to take place in October 1942. Special judges were appointed under the Special Criminal Courts Ordinance to try these cases. Smt. Jankidevi Bajaj had sent a messenger to Bombay and asked Munshiji to take up the defence in the cases. Shri Munshiji himself with Shri A. C. Amin went to defend the accused in Chimur case and sent Shri J. H. Dave and myself for the Ashti case.

Both the cases were lengthy affairs, and occupied two months. Dr. Kedar of the Nagpur Bar also came in the Ashti case after some time and joined us.

While we were comfortably lodged in the Bajaj Wadi at Wardha, Munshiji had to stay in Chanda where no arrangement worth the name was made for his stay. It was amusing to see Munshiji with his junior living in one room of a ground floor building, which until his arrival was used as a shop of

miscellaneous wares. Possibly none in the town could invite so dangerous a person as a counsel for the accused in the Chimur case.

Before the Chimur trial was over Munshiji was asked to attend to the application in the High Court of Nagpur for a writ of *Habeas Corpus* (*Sitao, Jholia and others* vs. *King Emperor,* A.I.R. 1943, Nagpur, 36), challenging the validity of the Special Criminal Courts Ordinance of 1942 and the Special Courts established thereunder. The application was heard by Mr. Justice Niyogi and Mr. Justice Digby. The two judges gave differing judgments and ultimately the application was heard by Chief Justice Grill. Appearing on behalf of the applicants Munshiji for the first time raised the question that the Ordinance was *ultra vires* of the Governor-General and that it was not retrospective and did not apply to incidents which took place before the events happened. Mr. Justice Niyogi delivering a very learned and scholarly judgment held in favour of the applicants. Mr. Justice Digby, however, gave a differing judgment. On this difference the Chief Justice as the third judge held most of the applicants' contentions untenable and dismissed the application.

This was the first attempt to attack the validity of the Ordinance, a piece of legislation which in those days was more hated
nance a piece of legislation which in those days was more hated
by the public than any other Ordinance. Finding this application as a precedent many a lawyer in other Presidency Courts filed such applications. The controversy was decided by the Federal Court holding the obnoxious Ordinance invalid.

Owing to the provisions of the Ordinance to dispose of cases as summary trials, many if not all, salutary rules of criminal jurisprudence, were thrown overboard. The identification parades in these cases as in all other cases where a mass of people are concerned as accused, were scarcely unimpeachable. The testimony of the prosecution witnesses when put to the test of cross-examination was hardly of a nature that would be called dependable. The Ordinance allowed the Special judges to take down a mere memorandum of evidence led before them. The accused were seated far away beyond hearing in the Chimur case.

Mr. Wickendon, I.C.S., the Special Judge, was described by Munshiji to me as a combination of conscientious Mr. Justice Broomfield of Bombay and the quick Mr. Justice Macleod, with an attitude which considered the Bar as entirely unnecessary and the Empire in danger. The great trial of Chimur had afforded the judge the opportunity for a little display of the armed might of the British Raj. All throughout the sittings the judge used to keep armed guards round the Chanda Court and an armed officer behind him.

We met a batch of these young prisoners at Wardha Station at midnight. When we tried to express our polite regrets for the extreme sentence awarded to them we met with the retort that "If the Japanese had invaded the Motherland of ours and there had been a national government we would have joined the armed forces and would have been called upon to make this very sacrifice. There was a war going on in the country for freedom and the trials and the penalties were merely the consequences of that war."

The Chimur case became more well-known in the country than the Ashti case. Owing to Prof. Bhansali having undertaken a fast, he had decided to change his resolve only if the C. P. Government promised to hold an independent inquiry into the cases of alleged rape in Chimur.

It might be remembered that during this period of Prof. Bhansali's great ordeal it was due to the publicity carried on by Shri Munshiji through public lectures and articles in the Press that the attention of the country was focussed on the problems of Chimur. He was in no small a measure, responsible for the victory of Prof. Bhansali.

About this time Munshiji came to be briefed on behalf of the Acharya of the well-known Swami Narayan Sect in Gujarat, the headquarters of which were at Vadtal. I too happened to be briefed as his junior in this case. The case as originally filed was a small affair in the Court at Borsad, a small town in Gujarat. But in the course of the trial it acquired a tremendous importance by reason of the Court having to go into the religious doctrines preached by the rival parties. For the last about half a century certain dissentient religious doctrines had

been preached by the defendants in the case. The defendants insisted upon being called *sadhus* of the Swami Narayan Sect and insisted upon going to the various temples belonging to the diocese of Vadtal and preach their heterodox doctrines. The Acharya therefore filed suit against them for an injunction to restrain them from going into the temples and for a declaration that the defendant and his followers were not followers of Swami Narayan and were not entitled to the benefit of the Vadtal temple and its subsidiary temples.

The first defendant who was the leader of the dissentient party had, during the last fifty years or so, undoubtedly acquired considerable influence as a religious preacher and in rivalry with the diocese of Vadtal had built a number of temples in the various villages in Gujarat. It had therefore become necessary for the authority of the Vadtal temple to put an end to the efforts of this rival sect, to use its temples.

Munshiji's elaborate argument was a discourse on the evolution of the monotheism of the *Gita* culminating in the latter day doctrines of Swami Narayan. He took the central doctrine of *avatar* and *kshar* and *akshar purush* from the *Gita*; traced their evolution through the *Bhagvat*, Ramanuja's writings, and the *Vasudeva Mahatmya* in the *Skandha Purana* to Swami Narayan who gave them a peculiar emphasis in his discourses and was accepted as the *avatar* of Shri Krishna. He also traced the evolution of the doctrines of the other sect to establish how they were destructive of the founders' doctrines. He then dealt with the English law in support of his contention that the members of a sect who do not accept the founder's doctrines are not entitled to the benefit of the foundation. In preparation, marshalling and presentation, his address in the Borsad case to my mind, is one of his most brilliant performances.

We won the Swami Narayana Case. The appeal from the decision was dismissed and the other side allowed their second appeal to the High Court to be dismissed also.

In 1937 he had a similar case of a different sect. He appeared for the Mullaji Saheb of the Borah Community and traced the evolution of the doctrine of the representative character of the Mullaji Saheb back to the days of the Prophet.

It was in such cases that Munshiji's scholarship and forensic ability revelled.

Shortly after this Munshiji appeared in another interesting case where he had to deal with the law of marriage against the Hindus. The case had already created a great excitement in the community to which the parties belonged. P. was the daugther of a rich man in Bombay. At a very tender age she was attracted to a boy of her own caste who induced her to leave her house and the custody of her parents. They went through some kind of marriage in a chawl at Parel in Bombay and immediately left for Poona. The parents made a search for her and through the assistance of some friends, induced the girl to return to their house. The girl's parents promised the boy that if the girl was still willing to go and stay with him they would raise no objection. The girl's running away from the family had given a great shock and distress to her orthodox parents.

On her return when she saw the distress of her parents, she realised the folly of her impulsive action and declined to go to the young man. The young man was given a chance to see the girl again but the girl was adamant and even refused to have any talk with him.

The youngman immediately started guardianship proceedings against the girl whom he called his wife. In these proceedings a compromise was arrived at as a result of which the father of the girl had to give the young man the costs of the proceedings. Under this compromise the young man was again to be given an opportunity to see the girl and it was agreed that if he succeeded in winning her back the parents would consent to her being married to him. The young man, however, failed to win her and filed a suit in the High Court of Bombay for a declaration that there was a valid and binding marriage between him and the girl.

Munshiji was instructed on behalf of the girl. In the initial stages the case had acquired an unpleasant notoriety by reason of a feeling that rich and orthodox parents were breaking up the romance of the two young lovers. Munshiji, the high priest of romance, had made a condition before accepting

the brief that he would appear only if the girl had, independently of any parental influence, decided to resist the alleged marriage. Heaps of letters written by the girl and the boy to each other added to the curiosity already prevailing not only in the community but even amongst outsiders. The young people had gone through a marriage ceremony of which the plaintiff had managed to have photographs taken. The plaintiff brought several eye witnesses to the marriage ceremony. There was evidence too that both the young people had gone and lived for two days at Poona.

In the course of the case, when the love letters were read, Mr. Justice Chagla remarked, "Mr. Munshi, your books seem to be responsible for these love letters." Munshiji promptly replied, "I can't disown responsibility, My Lord, for introducing romance in Gujarati life."

In the beginning Munshiji tried his utmost to induce the plaintiff to leave the girl to herself particularly as she had declined to have anything to do with him. At one stage the girl's parents offered a considerable sum if the plaintiff agreed to have the suit dismissed. While these negotiations were going on Munshiji had come to the conclusion that the young man was after all not a perfect Romeo and that the financial side of the marriage was not completely out of his consideration. By this time the girl made it perfectly clear that even if she was declared to be the wedded wife of this young man she would never go to him.

The main question in the case was whether the parties had gone through the marriage ceremony which the Hindu law prescribed. Munshiji had prepared himself with all the texts to giving the details of the necessary ceremonies. He got his chance when the sealed bundles containing the photographs of the marriage ceremony was opened. He immediately detected in the photographs what had escaped the attention of almost every one concerned in the case.

He cross-examined the plaintiff at great length on all aspects of the case except the marriage ceremony itself. At one stage even Mr. Justice Chagla asked Munshiji as to why he did not at once come to the ceremony part of the case. After two

days' cross-examination Munshiji looked at the clock. It was about 40 minutes before the recess when he let himself go. He did not want to leave to Shri Bhagvati (now Hon'ble Mr. Justice) who appeared for the young man, to have any opportunity for re-examining him after the recess. Commencing this part of the cross-examination Munshiji asked:

"And all the ceremonies were performed?"

Ans: "Yes."

Question: "What were the ceremonies?"

The Plaintiff had prepared himself well and described the ceremonies supposed to have been performed in all details. Munshiji encouraged him to give all the details of the rituals, and the plaintiff who was ready with such details was chuckling at the gaps in the examination-in-chief being filled in by the opposite Counsel by leading questions. The young man had given complete details of the ceremony as the *shastras* prescribed.

Then came the next series of the questions.

Q: "Where was Varuna i.e., the brass *lota* with the coconut?"

A: "In front of us."

Q: "I take it that the sacred fire was on the *Chori* (little mud platform). I take it that it was burning in front of you and the defendant."

A: "Yes."

Q: "I take it that the size was the usual one about five by five inches?"

A: "Yes."

Q: "The fire I take it was burning all throughout the ceremony?"

A: "Yes."

Q: I assume that the fire was kept burning by Ghee being poured in it at intervals during all the forty-five minutes of the marriage ceremony?"

A: "Yes."

Q: "Are you sure that the fire was burning throughout the ceremony?"

A: "Certainly, yes."

Munshiji looked up at the clock. It was exactly 1-30 p.m., half an hour was still to go for the recess. He took up the photograph of the marriage ceremony and presented it to the young plaintiff.

Q: "Will you show to the Court in this photograph where the fire is and where the Varuna (brass *lota* with coconut) is placed?"

The Plaintiff looked at the photograph, saw the blunder he had committed and was immediately taken aback.

The photograph only showed a glass tumbler in front of the wedding pair. There was no brass *lota* and no mud platform. "Where is the fire?" he was asked to point it in the photograph.

The plaintiff was like a drowning man willing to clutch at anything available. He spotted in the photograph something white near the sari of the bride and pointed it out as the fire.

Munshiji got him to mark the spot with blue pencil and asked "You are sure it is the fire before which you married." He said ,'Yes."

Then Munshiji sat down. There was some re-examination and the plaintiff's evidence came to a close.

Another witness followed who again elaborately described the paraphernalia of the sacrificial fire but had no other alternative except to repeat that the white spot in the photograph near the sari of the bride represented the sacrificial fire.

After the recess Munshiji brought a microscope and pointed out to the learned judge that what was pointed out as fire in the photograph was nothing but a flower which had dropped down on the sari of the bride. There was no fire, and no marriage.

The defence called a photographic expert who deposed to the absence of the fire in the photograph. After the examination of the expert the plaintiff completely collapsed and immediately gave up the case. This was perhaps the most dramatic case that Munshiji had ever handled.

The plaintiff as the Court rose shouted at Munshiji "You have converted a wife into a sister!"

But the most brilliant performance of Munshiji which I saw was his argument in the "Demonetisation Ordinance" case. The Government of India issued the Ordinance stopping the cashing of Rs. 1,000 notes after a certain date. In Munshiji's opinion, this ordinance did not exonerate the Reserve Bank from its I.O.U. liability as the promiser. A mandamus petition was filed, and heard by Mr. Justice Kania, Munshiji had a few hours with leading financiers and carried on research in the origin and development of the Bank promissory notes from the earliest days of the Bank of England. His arguments before the Original and in the Appeal Court consisting of Sir Leonard Stone, C.J., and Lokur J., was a marvel of precision and presentation, which richly deserved the learned Chief Justice's comments "brilliant and exhaustive." The petition however failed.

In 1944 Munshiji was engaged to defend one S. M. Sriramulu Naidu one of the accused in what came to be known throughout the country as the Lakshmikantam murder case. Lakshmikantam has now become a legendary figure in Madras. In 1932 or so he was convicted by the Madras High Court Sessions for forging a Court document and sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment. After his release in 1939, he started a Tamil weekly known as *Cinema Thoothu* and later shifted his activities to another Tamil weekly called *Hindu Nesan.* In the name of safeguarding the charity of Indian womanhood, he started attacking the character of several prominent ladies and of leading personalities in the Province of Madras. The people in the cinema world in the South became the main target of his bitter and caustic pen.

On November 8, 1944 when Lakshmikantam was returning in a rickshaw from the residence of his advocate, he was waylaid on General Collins Road, Vepery, Madras, and stabbed, with the result that he died later in the General Hospital, Madras.

The Criminal Investigation Department, after the police inquiry, charged M. K. Tyagaraja Bhagwatar a leading cinema

actor, N. S. Krishnan, the leading comedian and S. M. Sriramulu Naidu, a producer-director of repute in the South along with five others for the offence of conspiracy to murder Lakshmikantam. It was alleged that in pursuance of this conspiracy Lakshmikantam was stabbed by Vadivelu, one of the accused, on General Collins Road on the 8th November, 1944.

The writings of Lakshmikantam in his papers had made him known to almost every body in the South and his death naturally caused a great sensation. Speculations were rife as to who was the cause of his death, and when the three leading men of the film world were arrested on the charge of conspiracy, the interest of the public in the South knew no end.

Even during the proceedings before the committing magistrate every paper of repute including the *Hindu* of Madras reported the proceedings in full.

Though Munshiji was engaged for Naidu, at the request of the other accused he took over the lead in the conduct of the cross-examination and counsel for the other accused supplemented his cross-examination if they felt necessary. The accused were represented by twenty-six counsel in all. The prosecution was conducted by the then Advocate-General of Madras. Sri P. V. Rajamannar (now the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rajamannar), assisted by the Crown Prosecutor Sri P. Govinda Menon and three other juniors. The case lasted for about twenty-two days.

The case of the prosecution as against Munshiji's client, Naidu, was that he had entered into a conspiracy with Tyagaraja Bhagwatar and Arya Veera Senan, Accused No. 6 to do away with the deceased and that this conspiracy had taken place at the residence of Tyagaraja Bhagwatar.

As for the allegation of conspiracy at the residence of Bhagwatar the prosecution relied mainly on the evidence of one Kamalanathan, a relative of the deceased. The defence denied any conspiracy having taken place at the residence of Bhagwatar.

In support of the case the prosecution alleged that even before the fatal incident of the 8th November, on the 19th of October, 1944, Vadivelu had attacked the deceased with a

knife. With reference to this incident Kamalanathan while giving evidence, stated that he had been to the residence of Bhagwatar three days after the incident where he found Naidu with Bhagwatar and deposed to certain conversation alleged to have taken place between them and Accused No. 6.

According to Kamalanathan the purpose for which he had been to Bhagwatar's house was to get control of a paper to carry on counter propaganda against the deceased. This being an auspicious occasion for him he went to Bhagwatar's house after 4 p.m. on account of *Rahukalam. Rahukalam,* a span of an hour and a half occurs every day at varying times on different days and is generally avoided by every orthodox person in the South for any auspicious work.

Once the witness fixed the time of his visit, Munshiji, as the report in the *Hindu* shows, went round and round and got him to confirm the time. Then suddenly he shot out.

> Q: "Lakshmikantam was stabbed for the first time on 19th October?'
>
> Ans: "Yes.' '
>
> Q: "You went to see Naidu thereafter, sure?"
>
> Ans: "Yes, sure."
>
> Q: "Rahukalam on that day ended before 4 p.m. You are sure?"
>
> A: "Yes, I am sure."
>
> Q: "Look at this calander. Rahukalam ended before 4 p.m. on 26th October. The witness fumbled and had to say "Yes."
>
> Q: "Would you be surprised to know that Naidu was at the Taj Mahal Hotel at Bombay on the 26th October?"

The result of this cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses resulted in the Advocate General entering a *nolle prosequi* so far as Sriramulu Naidu was concerned.

Munshiji was to leave the next morning but the other counsel felt that his absence in the trial might react to their disadvantage and he was engaged for N. S. Krishnan, accused No. 4.

For this accused Munshiji tendered evidence to show that accused No. 4 was at Salem, and that on the 7th November

1944, while he was at Salem, Krishnan had received a registered letter. A receipt of his bearing that date was also tendered in evidence. But the jury disbelieving this part of the evidence brought a verdict of guilty and Krishnan was convicted on the charge of conspiracy and sentenced to transportation for life.

Krishnan and Bhagwatar both applied for leave to appeal to the Privy Council. The leave has been granted and their appeals are still pending before the Privy Council.

Commenting on the performance of Munshiji in this trial an eminent advocate of the Madras High Court remarked "Since the days of the great Norton, we had not heard such cross-examination." Writing his recollection of this case the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rajamannar who led the prosecution says:

> "I had the pleasure and privilege of being thrown together with Munshiji though we were on opposite sides in the sensational Lakshmikantam murder case which went on in the High Court for over a month last year (1945). I have the pleasantest recollections of those days and I have with me as a momento the photograph taken at the garden party given to Munshiji by the Gujarati Association in which we are found seated side by side... What impressed me most in his handling of the defence in that case was his remarkable thoroughness of preparation and mastery of detail. I do not believe he left anything to the juniors, though they never stinted any labour. Being myself a devotee of literature and a dabbler in playwriting, I could see and appreciate very often the sweep of imagination and his intimate knowledge of human nature in his cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses. He was always kind and generous to me. Our relations were very cordial and not once in the several trying days did a hot word pass between us. Munshiji does not belong to a class of lawyers whose world is made of statistics, law reports and case papers. He has varied interests and his achievement in many spheres of cultural activity are remarkable."

Munshiji has always maintained that the Senior's chamber where juniors and pupils came to learn should always be like a Hindu joint family pivoting round the senior. His

relations with his *devils* are not merely professional. On a young lawyer entering his chambers, the relations immediately become personal, and the new comer is not only extended a cordial and enthusiastic welcome from his *Guru* but received, as a member of his family. Apart from his concern for the junior's professional rise, Munshiji is always anxious to help his *devils* in every difficulty. Even an ordinary illness of one of them makes him extremely concerned. Any of his juniors can approach him without fear of disappointment for solution of a legal difficulty in the busiest of his busy time. Many a time he re-writes the draft of a pleading drawn by his *devil*. Apart from his personal interest the junior begins to share in the manifold activities that are ceaselessly going on in the chamber. Each of the *devils* is given a directive share in the various activities, educational, social or political, in which Munshiji is interested.

Amongst the many young men who have come into Munshiji's close contact during his legal career, one of the more prominent is Shri Purshottam Trikamdas. Inspite of deep difference in political thoughts, both of them by sheer toleraance and catholicity have maintained relations of mutual affection.

It was a piece of happy coincidence that Munshiji came to argue Shri Purshottam's own *Habeas Corpus* petition filed by him while he was in detention as a result of the last 1942 movement.

After the passing of the 'Quit India' Resolution of the 8th August 1942 some of the left wing Congressmen in the City of Bombay went underground under the leadership of Shri Purshottam. Shri Purshottam or shortly P. T., as he is popularly known amongst his intimates, successfully evaded the Bombay C.I.D. for a long time. He was ultimately found and arrested on November 19, 1942 at Bandra. On December 2, 1942 the Government of Bombay passed an order detaining him under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules and transferred him to the Lahore Central Jail. The Government of Bombay by another order dated the 22nd of December 1942 passed an order 'in supersession of the previous order authorising the Inspec-



The Munshi Chamber

tor General of Police, Punjab, to detain P. T. in any jail in the Punjab.

Late in 1945 when P. T. was transferred to Yeravada Jail after having experienced life in a couple of jails in the Punjab, in solitary confinement in one of them, the Government sought further to continue his detention under the Restriction and Detention Ordinance of 1944. He sent in an *Habeas Corpus* petition himself to the High Court of Bombay. Munshiji's eye caught the fatal defect in the order. The Government had been continuing a superseded order and keeping P. T. in jail unlawfully.

Munshiji argued the petition on behalf of P. T. before a Division Bench of the High Court of Bombay consisting of Mr. Justice Sen and Mr. Justice Gajendragadkar before a Court packed with the Advocates and friends of P. T. The contentions of the petitioner were upheld by the Court and P. T. was there and then set at liberty. No one in the vast crowd was gladder to see him again at liberty as his *Guru.*

Munshiji's relations with his colleagues at the bar as well as the judges have always been marked for their cordiality and sincerity. He is one of the few seniors who is popular both amongst the seniors and the juniors. Among the Solicitors he can count some as his life-long friends. Some of the present day judges are his personal friends. In the Court while conducting a case he hardly ever loses his temper with the opponent and the presiding judges. He likes and often times by mild pressure takes the judge through the various stages of his arguments in the very manner that he conceives the judge should go through. If the judge differs and goes out of the four walls of that argument he travels with the judge for the time being and by sheer dint of perseverance he again brings him to the road chalked out by him.

The chief factor which attracts the judge towards him is the tremendous grasp and thoroughness of preparation in Munshiji as counsel which gives scope to the judge to dispose of the matter quickly and expeditiously. The fundamental principles of law are so deeply ingrained in him that a mere propounding of an untenable principle is enough to make him

feel that something incorrect is being said or proposed. He needs no statutes and no precedents to have this kind of feeling. Knowledge of fundamentals has become a matter of common sense to him. The judge trying his case can safely depend on him for a correct exposition of law. This does not mean that a judge or an opponent can afford to remain without vigilance. Munshiji is always a dangerous opponent. His advocacy nearly always contains some element of surprise something incalculable. Behind the opening of a case or propounding of an ordinary proposition of law there runs a mercurial process of thought seeking new ways, new methods and penetrating the opponent's case to find out fatal gaps and loopholes. Even in the prosaic brief there peeps out the artist in him. The imagination of the artist supplies materials that are found wanting in the fabric that is built in the brief. It is because of that trait in him that Munshiji puts up before the judge and the jury an alternative case stating to them that his opponent's case is not the exact version of facts that happened but that the real is what he has constructed in his mind and is the only one that he narrated. That is where the novelist and the dramatist in him dominates the mere advocate. This is the reason why in the cases that he handles there comes up so often the dramatic element which makes his performance all the more fascinating. Conferences with him are not dull affairs. He is happy and frankly complimentary when facts are placed before him in a logical and preferably in his favourite method of chronological order. Very often by a slight twist or turn of a fact here and there a new complexion is given to the whole case, which one has not dreamt of before. No judge, however, opposed to him in a case complains of a lack of interest when Munshiji conducts a case before him. Once interested in a case or a law point contained in it, even his junior is astonished at the industry he devotes to it.

Of Munshiji, as an advocte, Shri K. A. Somjee, a senior member of the Bombay Bar and an ex-judge of the Bombay High Court says as follows:

"The more difficult the case, the more subtle the point, in greater prominence is brought out the great advocacy

of Munshiji. Munshiji always sails with the wind. Whether he is sailing a large ship or a frail bark, even on the stormy sea of the temper and limited understanding of a judge, Munshiji sails with the wind. He may realise fully that he is being taken away from his point but that does not ruffle him. He will take a large detour, keep the wind in his sail and in a subtle and clever manner will reach the calm of the harbour and lo and behold, more often than not the judge will be with him at the harbour.

"Munshiji is an asset to a clever judge. He is a great help to any judge. He facilitates the work of the judge by lucidly expounding difficult and subtle propositions of law.

"Munshiji is a pillar of strength to his client. In a weak case, Munshiji knows exactly how far to go and when the right moment arrives Munshiji will bring about a settlement which perhaps nobody would have thought possible.

"A word about Munshiji's junior, whoever he may be. In any case, if the junior is worth his salt and if he, even in the midst of Munshiji's argument were to draw the attention of Munshiji to any particular point, Munshiji with his great grasp will at once pick it up without the least hesitation and make good use of it. It is very few seniors only who can do that without being perturbed. Munshiji is one of them.

"One of the great points in Munshiji as a lawyer is that he always makes allowances for human frailties."

Occasional sojourns to the jails or as Minister have compelled total suspension of practice at the bar for long periods. But these obstacles have never affected the flow of work coming to his chambers. Recently higher and nobler calls have often taken him away from the Bar. In more recent years his educational activities have been taking most of his time and even a big brief with alluring fees is treated with a step-sisterly attitude. His membership of the Constituent Assembly that has been recently holding its sessions and of the Expert Committee appointed by the Congress, have deprived many a litigant of his services.

But perhaps, the loss to the Bar may be a gain to the future constitution of India.

Constructive Work

Gandhiji has given to the country a new word, Constructive Work. A man does not express through words, he expresses himself through creative activities. Munshiji has been a creative artist not only in literature, but in constructive work, social and educational.

It is difficult to say at what stage the career of Munshiji as social worker and educationist began. For he has not rested content with merely writing on social work but has actually worked to create institutions which would embody his ideas. According to his autobiography, in the first year of his going to College in 1902 he became an ardent pupil of the Ranade School of Social Reform and his first act was to throw up the Brahminical daily ceremonies and take to the Prarthana Samaj prayers. He was a social rebel from the start. When in the College he first gave up wearing the silk cloth for dinner and refused to keep the Brahminical tuft on his head he shocked his orthodox caste. He organised a small band of friends for carrying out a scheme of reforms in his caste, which consisted of education of girls, giving up of ceremonial caste dinners and stopping of the ceremonial crime of shaving the head of a widow following the death of her husband. This looks a modest programme now but 45 years ago for a small caste of highly orthodox Brahmins of Broach this was the height of revolutionary creed.

In 1904 when Munshiji came under the influence of Shri Aurobindo Ghose he became a devout reader of *Vandemataram*. He started a movement for opening a free library where extreme nationalist papers could be made available to the pub-

lic. This little library in about three years time became the Dadabhoy Naoroji Library. It was Munshiji's first effort at begging. He was in the LL.B. class and contacted Sheth Sukhadwala and secured a donation from which this library in Broach was built. When he came to Bombay in 1910 he threw himself heart and soul into the work of Gurjar Sabha, a body of budding Gujarati authors many of whom ultimately acquired a permanent position in different walks of life. Munshiji's quivering passion for whatever he advocated soon made itself felt and he was elected the Secretary of the Sabha. The Gurjar Sabha was remodelled and the scope of its work was enlarged. In 1915-16 all the workers drifted into the Home Rule League, and became the first pioneers of political propaganda in Gujarat. Some of them, in fact, were the first to invest the Gujarati language with public platform rhetoric.

From 1907 to 1915 Munshiji's social work lay in founding an educational fund for his caste and in trying to bring about a fusion of the different sub-castes of Bhargava Brahmins. He organised and edited a quarterly for his caste, his first journalistic venture, and established sub-committees in different sections; he was one of those who actively assisted in the formation of a conference of the editors of caste magazines, who started an annual in which the progress in different small castes in Gujarat was reviewed.

Shri Bhajekar, the Secretary of the Bombay Social Reform Association, drawn by the enthusiasm and fervour which Munshiji exhibited in the cause of social reform as well as his eloquence, took him into the Social Reform Association. In 1912-13 Munshiji ardently championed the cause of widow remarriage. And after one of his brilliant speeches he was highly complimented by the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Chandavarkar, then the President of the Social Reform Association. Munshiji worked under Sir Narayan Chandavarkar and Shri Bhajekar for some years and was elected as one of the General Secretaries of the Social Reform Conference held in Bombay in 1915. For two years he worked hard and tried to understand the cause of social reform but to a man of his intense creative energies the negative creed of social reform as represented by the Social

Reform Conference failed to make an appeal. His close contact with some of the leading social reformers resulted in a revulsion of feelings and by 1917 he revolted against the creed of social reform based on mere rationalism. He had then little faith in God. His losing faith in the social reform school is shown in a letter which he wrote to one of his most intimate friends Shri P. K. Desai who had initiated him into the Ranade School of Social Reform in the college days (Vide *Landmark Letters*).

About this time he also delivered a speech in the Students' Brotherhood under the presidentship of the late Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri in which he discoursed on a comparative study of ideals of manhood as described by Plutarch, Thomas A. Kempis, Buddha, Nietzche, and the Aryan manhood as described in the *Rig Veda* and the *Bhagvadgita*. He said:

> "When an Arya becomes the embodiment of power of his own temperament, he becomes an elemental force, like lightning, like the thunderbolt. His power is then limitless, his brilliance never fades; his strength never wavers; his peace is unbroken; He realises self-fulfilment on the lines of his own temperament, he works to express his own soul. He is his own law-giver, the lord of his destiny expressing himself on the lines of his own *swadharma*."

In this way the message of limitless strength was preached by him as a student.

Thus even at the time he was struggling to discover perfection, and to the student who compared the heroic characters that Munshiji has woven into his stories appear that his gospel ultimately found expression in the *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life,* that throughout these years he has struggled in literature and in life to serve an ideal based on strength which does not waver nor tire and which he calls perfection.

II

From the Home Rule League Munshiji drifted into the Congress working at meetings and Conferences. In 1915 he became with Shri Jamnadas Dwarkadas the first editor of *Young India* but soon left the editorship due to trouble with

some of the organisers. He also assisted Shri Indulal Yagnik in the publication of the Gujarati Monthly *Navjivan* and *Satya*. Between 1919, when he withdrew from the Congress, and 1921, all his energies were concentrated on his profession. In 1922, however, he started the Sahitya Sansad, a literary society. He also founded and edited the famous *Gujarat*, a monthly, which inspite of its disappearance for the last twenty years, has always been considered one of the best ever issued in Gujarati.

Sahitya Sansad was not merely a literary Academy. It was a new literary movement and several of the present well-known authors in Gujarati were associated with Munshiji in this movement. Every year Sahitya Sansad held an annual meeting at which Munshiji delivered an annual address. Each of these addresses became the subject of bitter controversies for many months after it was delivered, for it contained a revolutionary outlook in literature or life. Some of the titles of these addresses—"Cultural Consciousness of Gujarat," "Defiance of Conventionalism", "The Dominant note of modern times: the Joy of Life," "The Right to Literary Beauty"—reflect the new outlook which he brought to Gujarat. He claimed for every artist the right to create beauty as he saw it. In 1927 he presented a Gujarati version of his earlier English speeches in an address styled "Visions of Manhood." A new prophet—a prophet of joy and strength had risen in Gujarat. Young and ardent writers of the romantic school sprang round, one of the most prominent being Lilavati Munshi, whom later Munshiji married.

Between 1922 when Sahitya Sansad was founded and 1924-25 when Munshiji went into the University as a Fellow, his activities were mainly literary. He was the first in Bombay to organise music and dancing and bring it as an art of domestic life among the educated Gujarati families.

In 1925 he was elected a Fellow of the University of Bombay, and under the guidance of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, the then Vice-Chancellor, he flung himself into all its activities. Within six months of his entering the University, he was elected to the Syndicate and on several of the Boards, studying problems of University life, submitting elaborate notes on the

different aspects of University activities and lending vigour to them in a manner he alone can. We have before us in his papers exhaustive notes on the development of the post-graduate activities of the University.* He fought for giving to Indian languages a larger place in the University curriculum. In those days the School of Economics was the step-child of the Senate and attempts were often made to scrap it. Munshiji, often single-handed, fought against these attempts.

In 1924, Munshiji organised the Panchgani Education Society which ran the Panchgani Hindu High School. From the first he had immense faith in residential schools. He would not as his writings show, conceive of an ideal school, college, or University unless it was a colony of students living and working in the midst of teachers and professors. Experiments with the Panchgani Hindu High School showed him the diversified life of Hindu students and it became a cardinal doctrine of his educational programme that Indian students must be trained to live together in a common way of life if they had to emerge into a compact social group.

In 1925 Munshiji actively inaugurated the movement for a University of Gujarat. In association with Dr. K. G. Naik, he organised the Gujarat University Association with Sir Chimanlal Setalvad as the chairman.

In one of his speeches delivered at the time he said:

> The Bombay Presidency as a political unit is an unnatural monstrosity created by historical accident and administrative convenience. It has in its fold four groups of people with differing traditions and mother tongue. Maharashtrians, for instance, in spite of the bugbear of Brahmin and non-Brahmin differences, have a unifying literature. A tradition of life, which once inspired them to go and conquer Delhi, unites this more or less homogeneous race from Indore to Belgaum. That this race with its tradition, literature and ideals, with its characteristic way of expressing its genius should be without a university of its own, without an institution for developing its genius and culture, indicates an absence of constructive statesmanship which can only be considered pardonable in a politically and economically helpless people like ourselves.

The same is true of Gujarat. From Idar to Bombay an intelligent and homogeneous race has been for ages and through historical vicissitudes developing a distinct culture. The rigidity of caste system, which fetters progress in other provinces, does not exist here. Its women enjoy freedom and contribute their quota to life far more energetically than in other parts of the country. Religious fanaticism has no hold among the people. Neither communal discord nor religious feuds divide the race. Here are blended diverse shades of different civilisations in a rich and harmonious unity. Its modern literature is certainly one of the best in modern India. Intellectual restlessness, a spirit of organisation and self-sacrifice, the gentle grace of cultured existence, and the noble passions of generous manhood—all characterise modern Gujarati culture.

The only nationhood possible to us is what has been possible in America, where different States with self-governing institutions and distinctive cultures combine to create a commonwealth and an indivisible central executive.... Sooner or later India, politically must consist of self-governing states with cultural distinctiveness.''

In one of his election campaigns he met the late Sir Manubhai Mehta, then Dewan of Baroda and His Highness the Gaekwar, who had for several years looked upon Munshiji as a brilliant product of his Baroda College had a soft corner for him. As a result the Gaekwar appointed a Commission to establish a University at Baroda. For some months Munshiji worked the scheme in association with Acharya Anandshankar Dhruva and Dr. K. G. Naik. It was then that he realised that there was no use in having a University unless the place where it was situate had an academic atmosphere, and in 1928 he could not find it either at Baroda or at Ahmedabad.

In 1926-27 he was occupied with his University activities and in his work in the Legislative Council of Bombay. In the Bombay Legislative Council the University Bill which was brought by Dewan Bahadur Harilal Desai, the then Minister of Education, was largely influenced by him.

The programme with which Munshiji identified himself was

(a) to make it a live centre of academic influence and traditions,

(1) by the creation of a representative post-graduate and research department;

(2) by appointing University Professors in important branches of knowledge; and

(3) by associating with the University eminent Professors from other Colleges as part-time post-graduate or extension lecturers;

(b) to create an atmosphere of University life,

(1) by the University having a journal of its own;

(2) by inaugurating a definite course of extension lectures;

(3) by publishing the research conducted and the extension lectures delivered under its auspices:

(4) by making its library a first-rate academician's library; and

(5) by adopting or encouraging activities like inter-collegiate sports and debates to enable students from all parts of the Presidency to come together and acquire some degree of pride for their *Alma Mater.*

The diverse drafts in his possession show how stage after stage he had to battle for the new University Bill.

In one of his early election addresses he had drawn attention to the development of technology in the University.

"But I should like to know, what this general culture, this liberal education is, which, while it wastes the precious years of the life of a student prevents him from being a mechanic, an electrical engineer, a technologist? This culture is but a little mathematics, a little history, a workable knowledge of the language and literature of the ancients. To say that this is the only liberal education for a modern man is to my mind pure nonsense... But it is no education, liberal or otherwise, while pretending to prepare a modern man for the life of modern times leaves a student without the power to use his mother tongue, without any knowledge of the natural sciences and modern languages, without any training which would enable him to appreciate the institutional life of the modern world."

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Munshiji joined hands to bring the technological department of the University into existence. In the beginning it was hard, and sometimes a lone battle, for the Senate was against it. Ultimately a donation was secured

from a charity fund involved in a case before the High Court for the laboratory of the future technological department. Munshiji then worked up a scheme of securing the Cowasjee Jehangir Institute on a nominal rent and as a result of his efforts a Committee was appointed and the place was secured. One of the donations which he secured went to the University for the Vassonjee Madhowjee Lectureship in Gujarati Literature and History. The first Ordinances and Statutes were also drafted by a small Committee and Munshiji had practically to bear the brunt of the work undertaken by this Committee.

About this time he associated himself with Sheth Tulsidas, Shri Gordhandas Bhagvandas and Shri M. V. Desai, Bar-at-Law, who were oganising Sir Harkisondas Hospital. He was elected the Chairman of the Institution, and continues to be so since.

III

In 1925 the oganisers of the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad (Literary Conference), which for fifteen years had not been able to secure a proper organised existence, requested Munshiji to undertake its organisation. He undertook the work and in 1925 at the conference held in Bombay the Parishad was reorganised. Munshiji was himself elected the Vice-President—and except for a break of six years—has continued to be the Vice-President and the principal worker of that institution. Due to his efforts the Parishad today is a biennial all-Gujarat festival where Gujaratis irrespective of political and religious differences meet. Munshiji wanted it to be a 'temple of Gujarat-consciousness' and beyond doubt he has succeeded in achieving that aim.

The Parishad was the first to work for a University of Gujarat. Munshiji moved a Resolution at the Rajkot sessions of the Parishad, held in December 1946, urging the formation of a unit of the Indian Union comprising Gujarat, Malwa and Rajputana. Through the Parishad he has thus placed before Gujaratis a conception of wider unity and a loftier destiny.

After Munshiji took up the work of the Sahitya Parishad, the parent body, the Sahitya Sansad, restricted its activities to

the encouragement of amateur theatricals, dance and music. And it has fulfilled its aim. Dancing has now become one of the domestic arts of educated Gujaratis. Munshiji also took up organising of amateur dramatics and in 1928 *Kakani Shashi* one of his social plays, was staged, barristers and solicitors appearing on the stage for the first time. The first performance of this play is still remembered by Gujaratis as a work of perfection and the success was mostly due to the joint direction of Munshiji and Shri Purshottam Trikamdas who played the hero's part. Nothing escaped Munshiji while directing the play and many still remember how he taught some girls to walk and smile and make love.

IV

Nataraja Vashi, the well-known Gujarati artist, who helped Munshiji in the direction of some of his plays and also took part therein writes:

> In every nation or community, there is a rise and fall in the cultural activities, and only a man of vision and constructive ability can restore the cultural stability. There was a time in Gujarat when drama and acting on the stage fell into great disgrace. Along with these some of the vital art traditions of Gujarat were also slowly but surely sinking into oblivion. Garba, the pride of Gujarat had come to be looked upon by the socialites as a superfluous pastime. For women to dance *garba* or to act in dramas even non-commercial—L'art Pour l'art—was abominable. Putting the educated folk on the boards or to arrange, a *garba* dance was a social crime, and if ever any one contemplated doing such a thing, a hue and cry was raised in the society. The doors were slammed against him. It was a risk which few could run.
>
> It was during such a time that one day I got a warning from my father that on a particular day I sould not go out near the Royal Opera House, because a sort of disturbance or riot was expected. Later on I heard that this was due to the fact that one Kanaiyalal Munshi, a Gujarati play-wright and author was producing a play with society men and women taking part in it. It was the most disgraceful act that Kanaiyalal Munshi should ever do!

Munshiji was producing a Gujarati play with the help of educated amateurs, wherein the female roles were to be played by society women. In his cast were also included some Parsees, who too are Gujaratis. Orthodox opinion went so high against Munshiji and his production that the play had to be postponed. But Munshiji with his dauntless courage and iron determination went on ceaselessly working towards the end of producing plays by amateurs drawn from the society. In spite of enormous difficulties and social impediments, Munshiji ultimately came out successful. It was by his efforts that the whole face of our Theatre has changed; for today, to take part in any amateur drama and to be able to do it well, is considered an accomplishment. To have pulled out theatrical acting and productions from the mire of social abuse and disgrace, and putting it on a high social pedestal was a singular work on the part of Munshiji and will be writ in letters of gold in the history of Gujarati theatre.

To be able to pursue all the activities connected with literature and theatrical art, Munshiji got together people interested in such activities and formed the Gujarati Sahitya Sansad. This institution, like all great institutions, has grown from stage to stage under the able guidance of Munshiji.

Munshiji did not stop at staging or producing of Gujarati plays, and bringing the impenetrable domain of the theatre within the reach of every common man and woman, whosoever has any gift or talent for it. But he also brought the tinkling and jingling music of the dance girls into the Gujarati home. It will not be difficult to understand the utter contempt with which this art was looked upon by our socialites. Dance was considered a sin. And in those days those who tried to dance, most certainly broke their legs!

It is remarkable to note how ingeniously the cultural renaissance was brought about in Gujarat by Munshiji. The Gujarati Sahitya Sansad, which he founded, functions more or less as a federal body, wherein all the members operate as completely autonomous units. The result is that whenever Sahitya Sansad organises any function or celebration, all the members give their full co-operation, and whenever the members of the Sahitya Sansad do something on their own, the Sansad readily helps them with every assistance they need. This gave great impetus to the long-felt need of the various cultural activities in Gu-

jarat, which has been wrongly termed a land of business-men.

In the field of dance, Munshiji moved not only very cautiously, but also systematically. The great Manipuri teacher, Guru Nabakumar, an old associate of Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, was engaged by him to train his own children. This training in dance, he slowly and steadily introduced in the homes of his several friends. In due course several young dancers were ready and so he set out to organise the first Gujarati dance-drama of *Bhakta Narasaiyo* under the auspices of the Sansad. For this production he also trained several other dance enthusiasts, and thus created permanent interest in the art of dance.

The production of *Narasaiyo* gave Gujarat a new technique of dance-drama so far unknown. Somewhere about this period, there was a craze in Gujarat to indulge in all sorts of histrionics to the accompaniment of Bengali songs, most of which were sung with terribly distorted pronunciation. Munshiji insisted on the use of Gujarati songs, by Gujaratis, particularly if the theme was taken from Gujarat. In this connection, at some later date, when a local school was staging a few dance numbers to the accompaniment of Bengali songs, and where Munshiji was presiding, he staged a walk out in resentment of using exclusively Bengali songs by Guajrati amateurs. This was done with the sole motive of making Gujarati songs take their legitimate place on the Gujarati stage.

The production of *Narasaiyo* was acclaimed as an artistic achievement of Munshiji and Sahitya Sansad. The fire thus kindled by the conscious efforts of Munshiji with the passage of time burst forth into torches, whose light shall ever enliven and encourage the cultural activities of Gujarat. After a big demand from the public, Munshiji set out to stage yet another dance-drama of *Jai Somnath,* It is indeed gratifying to note that the public which at one time decried the theatrical and cultural activities of Munshiji not only lent its complete support to Munshiji but it also wanted him to give them one more play in his new technique of dance-drama.

Complying with the request of the public, Munshiji wrote down the script of *Jai Somnath,* a dance-drama from his famous novel of the same name. This time the story was entirely different. The enthusiasm of the dance aspirants and amateur musicians and actors was so great that Munshiji found it difficult to select his cast. It was a

production of vast dimensions and much more elaborate than *Narasaiyo*, and so Munshiji tried his best to accommodate somewhere about a hundred amateurs and about thirty musicians. This production, unlike *Narasaiyo* had several elaborate settings and stage effects, and so Munshiji brought on the boards of Gujarati theatres painters and other artists required for such work purely on the basis of co-operation for cultural renaissance.

Though the production work of *Jai Somnath* was highly departmental, and qualified persons were looking after each department, Munshiji was always ready and willing to give his guidance whenever necessary and whosoever sought it. In Gujarati language there is that inimitable Munshi style. As in Gujarati, in the stage production also, there is a Munshi touch. The death sequence of Chaula, the heronie of *Jai Somnath* bore one of those Munshi touches. While arranging a sequence of such a dramatic climax, Munshiji brings into play all his past experiences in the realm of beauty and art and tries to give it not only an intelligible portrayal, but also an effective one. His delicate and sensitive artistic temperament had also pulled heavily from the rare experience he had while watching the deathless art of Pavlova in her "Dying Swan." The touching death sequences of beautiful Chaula in *Jai Somnath* was indeed a projection of this experience.

Kakani Shashi and *Sneh Sambhram* the two full length plays of Munshiji become landmarks in the history of amateur stage production in Gujarat. Several of his best sellers have also adorned the silver screen of India. Like his plyas and novels, his film scenarios also have the touch of a visionary that he is.

To be able to take such genuine active interest in the cultural movements and handling productions of vast dimensions, it no doubt requires great patience and perseverance. Therefore, one wonders how Munshiji has managed to find time for cultural work, when most of his time is taken up by his legal practice and other political and educational activities. Surely this is only possible when a man firmly believes in the unmistakable need of cultural and artistic activities as a means to achieve lasting human qualities in this world of toil and turmoil. Who would question the unfailing need of art in human life? Indeed many a troubled soul has found solace from art as much as from philosophy.

Today on the artistic map of India, Gujarat has secured an enviable position—thanks to the untiring efforts of Munshiji.

V

In 1929 at the instance of Shri (now Sir) Jamshedji Kanga, the then Advocate-General, Munshiji took upon himself the trusteeship of the Kabibai Trust. He had met Shri S. R. Das, then the Law Member of the Government of India, who was then organising the Dehra Dun Public School, and after a study of the public school system he decided that there should be a school in the nature of a public school for young Gujaratis. A charity suit in which he appeared as counsel gave him the necessary opportunity and under his advice the scheme was altered so that the establishment of a Public School became possible. In this effort he was assisted by Sheth Mulji Ranchhordas, one of the old trustees, who has since been a close associate of Munshiji in organising this school. The trust was reorganised, and its accounts put on a proper footing and a hostel for college students was started at Nasik.

He joined the Congress in 1930, broke the salt law and went to jail, where he pursued his yogic practices, which led him year by year into what he has called the *experiential approach to the Bhagavad Gita.* Those were hectic days for him —from 1930 to 1934—during which time, he twice went to jail.

During his second instalment of jail life which began in the early days of 1932 he wrote several books. It was during these years that he developed his theory of Yoga which now finds expression in his more recent books.

In 1936, on behalf of the Kabibai Trust he bent his energies to the task of bringing into existence the Hansraj Morarji Public School. It was Munshiji who brought the late Principal Shukla to the School. The Trustees of the Kabibai Trust, with Dewan Bahadur K. M. Jhaveri as Chairman, were a happy team and the school made rapid progress. Munshiji worked out every little detail and within a short time Sheth Megji Mathradas, who had become one of the Trustees, associated himself with the work of the Trust. In 1938 when Munshiji was

the Home Minister of Bombay the Trust acquired 130 acres of land for the school at Andheri on the road to Versova. In 1938-39 the scheme of the Public School was worked out and thus the first institution of its kind in Western India came into existence.

VI

Shri Dhirubhai Desai, Principal of the Hansraj Morarji Public School writes:

> "Munshiji's contribution to the preparation of the scheme and to setting out the aims and ideals of the School has been invaluable. His zeal and drive were responsible for the starting of the school in June 1939, even before the school buildings were erected. It was due to his enthusiasm and determination that an efficient staff was quickly got and the School made an humble beginning with 45 boys in rented premises known as "Three Bungalows" near the Andheri Railway Station. After that, Munshiji concentrated his attention on getting the school buildings erected as soon as possible. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel performed the foundation ceremony of the Public School buildings. In the work of the actual construction of the buildings, Munshiji was ably assisted by the late Sheth Megjibhai as also his other colleagues on the Kabibai Trust. He gave detailed suggestions regarding the plans of the buildings and often went to Andheri to see how the construction work was progressing.
>
> In the early days, he visited the School, frequently, met the pupils and the staff and inspired them. The rapid development and progress of the school owed very much to Shri Munshiji's far-sightedness, his enthusiasm, his dynamic personality, his keen insight into educational matters, his quick grasp and his love for the ideals of "Nav-Gujarat" and the Indian Culture.
>
> One finds the impress of his personality in various matters of the school. He has thought deeply and precisely about the ideals of the school, which are clearly set forth in the Pupils' Pledge recited by the students every day which is as follows:
>
> "As a pupil of the Hansraj Morarji Public School, I pledge myself to fulfil its ideals. It is the aim of my life to serve, Gujarat, India and the Aryan Culture. I constantly strive to achieve the highest ideals of Gujarat. If

need be, I shall sacrifice my all for the glory and greatness of India. In order that the Arya Sanskriti may remain pure and inviolate, I will incessantly strive to study and to preserve it.''

No matter, big or small, has escaped him. The physical fitness of the pupils, their diet, and table manners, their dress and the way to wear it, correct pronunciation and intonations, politeness and courtesy, the importance of the mother-tongue and of Sanskrit, the study of *Gita*—all have received his attention.''

VII

Munshiji's mind was all these years moving in the direction of founding a colony of full-time literary men and scholars. In 1922 he had thought of such a colony in connection with the Sahitya Sansad. The land was already purchased at Santa Cruz at that time but things were not ripe.

The re-integration of Aryan Culture through the development of Gujarati language and literature was one of the ideals for which he had been working through literature. His point of view as expressed in *Gujarata and Its Literature* had been that Gujarat had no meaning except as an expression of Aryan Culture, and his devotion to Gandhiji was largely based upon the fact that in him he found the living expression of some of the fundamentals of Aryan Culture. In 1934 he accompanied Gandhiji to the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Indore and became keenly interested in Hindi as the *Rashtrabhasha.*

Promptly he started a joint stock company, acquired the magazine *Hans,* and in association with the well-known Hindi novelist Munshi Premchand began to edit it. It was not a mere magazine in Hindi. It reproduced important literary productions in different languages of India in Hindi translations and was very well received throughout the whole country.

Munshiji's position as an all-India author and a lover of Hindi attracted the attention of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, which elected him the President of the Rashtra Basha Parishad at Jaipur in 1944. This was followed next year by his election as President of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, the most important literary conference in the country, the sessions of

which were held at Udaipur. His learned address became an outstanding exposition of the place of Hindi and Sanskrit in the life of India.

"We must not forget this historical fact. Urdu was a style of Hindi cultivated by the Muslims. Hindustani was the 'bazaar' language of the Delhi region, while Hindi was in direct descent from the Sauraseni Apabhramsha and Vrajabhasha, and had the elements common to all the languages of the North. Sanskrit had always enriched it. It was the national language of the North, as was Apabhramsha in the age of Kanauja.

Derived from Sanskrit through Sauraseni Prakrit and Vrajabhasha, it is the national language by right of heredity. The unity of Northern Indian languages is reflected in it, as it was in Vrajabhasha prior to 1800 A.D. It can be a meeting ground of languages which are dominated by or mixed with Sanskritic elements. People speaking the Dravidian languages can easily acquire it by reason of the common Sanskritic vocabulary.

The Nagari script is familiar to 60 per cent of the persons speaking Indian languages. It alone can therefore become a national script with the least possible effort.

What is the reason of its 'understandability?' The reason is, Hindi is made up of the common elements of almost all Indian languages. Without a special effort to learn the language, a little Hindi is enough for intercourse throughout the country; in the Urdu speaking population of the North, on account of its common basis; in Bihar, South-West Punjab, Delhi, U. P., Rajasthan, and Central Provinces, because it is the language of the people: in Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat and Maharashtra because they are allied varieties in the Dravidian language areas on account of its Sanskritic vocabulary. That is why it is the national language."

This honour was, for a Gujarati literary man, a high tribute to his pre-eminent position among the literary men in this country, and so far as Gujarati speaking Presidents were concerned an honour shared by him with Mahatma Gandhi.

VIII

At the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held at Nagpur, Munshiji founded the Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad with Gandhiji as

the President. But he soon felt again that the time was not ripe, at any rate for him, to launch such a movement, and the Parishad was abandoned. The programme of a federation of literary societies was thus formulated by him.

> "But Nationalism dominates the present and will continue to dominate the future. All provincial effort will continue to find increasing self-fulfilment in a greater national unity; and a commonwealth of literature to which each Indian province will have contributed its best and noblest will be a necessary attribute of India, if she is to attain the full stature of Nationhood. But such a commonwealth can only be rendered possible through the medium of Hindi and implies a co-ordinated effort on the part of literary men from all provinces. When this result is achieved we would have laid the foundation of a federation of provincial Sahitya Parishads—in fact, an all-India Sahitya Parishad. I have cherished this idea since 1925 when I came to be actively associated with the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad.
>
> The spirit of Aryan culture has, in the past, obliterated provincial boundaries and struggled to create literary and artistic unity despite the difference of script and language. With modern civilisation to provide facilities and nationalism to furnish political leverage, its unifying activities are sure to bear early fruit. Within a decade or two, we may see a growing national language and a commonwealth of literatures, to which each Indian province will have contributed its best and noblest."

Slowly Munshiji's mind was groping towards its pre-appointed destiny. He had been so far dreaming of *Rishis* and giving them a living existence through his works of fiction. The Brahmin in him, however, was expressing itself in diverse ways, may be in an intensely modern form. In 1930 in one of his recurrent periods of Yogic practices he saw or as he puts it, he imagined he saw, the vision of the great sage Vyas. The vision as he saw it is described in his autobiographical prose poem *Sishu ane Sakhi*. In actual life the memory of the vision pursued him and it began unconsciously to shape his constructive work to a well-defined pattern. The worldliness in Munshiji was slowly being fused into a dynamic unity

under the sub-conscious urge to realise the fundamentals of Aryan Culture.

In November 1938 he founded the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan at an inaugural meeting held in his compound at 26, Ridge Road, Bombay. On the occasion he defined the aim and object of the Bhavan thus:

> "For many years it had been the dream of the Sahitya Sansad to crystalize its work into a centre in which the ancient learning and modern intellectual aspirations of this land may combine to create a new literature, new history and a new Culture. The Bhavan will be an Association which will organise active centres where Aryan learning is studied and where modern Indian Culture is provided with a historical background."

From that date the Bhavan became the passion of his life. It was to be not merely an educational institution, but the dynamic source of reintegrated Aryan Culture. In the first extension lecture that he delivered in the series called "The Fundamentals of Aryan Culture", he said:

> "Aryan culture is not the apparatus of life, not the stones by which the mother of the Vedic *Rishi* ground corn, not the canoe by which Rama and Sita crossed the Sarayu, not the *charkha* in which many see the embodiment of its spirit. The civilisation of India, that is, its technological and institutional equipment, has varied, or, been borrowed from others from age to age. The bridges which span our rivers, the mills which weave our cloth and the legislatures which resound with our political hopes and disappointments are not ours by invention but by adoption. They are the permanent possessions of mankind which influence culture no doubt, but do not constitute it. Similarly our social habits, the caste, the family, the marriage system are but crusts of life, not life itself. Even the social and religious beliefs by which culture was propagated and preserved in Gujarata in the past do not in themselves constitute it. These change with time, with the civilisation of each age.
>
> "This culture, however, is to be found in the sense of continuity; in the consciousness of Indian unity in the permanent values in which the Aryans have always seen the fulfilment of life; in the ethical and idealistic absolutes

which have moulded the Aryan outlook on the eternal questions; What is life? What is its purpose and end?

"What then is life? What is its purpose and end? Aryan culture conceives it as endless Becoming pursued on the path of the Mahavratas, so that life freed from sorrow and struggle may grow into pure Joy as an experience above and beyond the uncertainties of earthly existence. In the use of materialistic power by an indomitable and all pervasive effort to will these Ideas into existence lies the secret of India's undying life; in their triumph over such power, the only hope of humanity."

In organising the work of the Bhavan, Munshiji flung his passionate energy and concentrated zeal. In 1938 the institution only started with a post-graduate research Department. Soon he secured the association of his old friend Muni Shri Jinavijayaji, the greatest living scholar of Apabrahmsha and particularly of Jain literature. The Bhavan soon had a pathashala where Sanskrit studies were pursued according to the old Shastric style.

In 1939 Sardar Patel and Munshiji decided to establish an agricultural farm in Gujarat. From two trusts, donations aggregating to 15 lakhs were given to the Government of Bombay and the Government agreed to pool its Chharodi farm and gave an yearly grant of Rs. 60,000. Munshiji selected the lands at Anand, drafted the aims and objects of the institute and began the organising work. Particularly he modelled the School of Agriculture on the lines of the folk schools in Denmark thus giving to the young sons of agriculturists practical training in agriculture. The Institute of Agriculture at Anand consisting of Mansukhlal Chhaganlal School of Agriculture and Mungalal Goenka Institute of Animal Husbandry, Animal Nutrition and Dairying, soon became a big centre controlled by the Governing Body of which Sardar Patel when out of jail has been the Chairman and Munshiji the Vice-Chairman. Munshiji was the Chairman when Sardar was in jail. After the Congress Ministry resigned in 1939 the Government of Bombay looked with great suspicion on the Institute, which they thought was a breeding ground for civil disobedience. And during Sardar's absence the powers that were

in the Bombay Secretariat made frantic efforts to get the Institute out of the hands of the Governing Body. It was a trial of strength between Munshiji and Sir Henry Knight. A donation which Munshiji had secured for putting up an agricultural college at Anand was unceremoniously turned down. Attempts were made to deprive the Governing Body of its powers. Munshiji fought and succeeded and the Institute of Anand is today one of the finest institutions in the country of the kind. Recently Sheth Amritlal Hargovandas due to the efforts of Munshiji offered a donation of Rs. 5 lakhs for an agricultural college at Anand and the Kher Ministry has agreed to set it up. It is expected to open in June 1947.

For some years Munshiji also worked on the Governing Body of the Fellowship School and rescued it from great difficulties.

He was also one of the founders of the Bombay City Ambulance Corps of which he has been the President since 1930. He is also the President of the Hindu Deen Dayal Sangh, a Society, which collects and brings up unclaimed babies, mostly just born.

His work is not restricted merely to organising these institutions and improving their financial strength but it extends also to providing the factors going to make up an atmosphere for these institutions. He is not merely an organiser; he goes among the staff and the students, mixes freely with them, inspires them with his enlivening conversation. When he used to go among the destitute and delinquent children in the Chembur Home he was often found sitting amongst them telling them stroies as he alone can tell. He loves the young generation. His recent work on the creative art of life has been accepted by critics as an inspiring study in the ideals of education.

When he became a trustee of the Kanji Khetsey Trust the Kanji Khetsey Chhatralaya for Gujarati ladies studying for the University was founded. It is an institution where about 35 young ladies receive free housing and board. It has already done more than any other single institution in Bombay in giving scope to young Gujarati girls for higher education.

IX

On his assumption of office as Minister in charge of Law and Order in July 1937, Munshiji under the provisions of the constitution of the Children's Aid Society, as they existed then, became the Vice-President of the Society, the first Indian to occupy that position in the Society since its inception in 1927.

Within a very short time of his association with the activities of the Society, Munshiji was able to appreciate the magnitude of the problem in respect of the delinquent and destitute children in the City. In the midst of his varied activities and inspite of the serious illness of his son in August 1938 Munshiji invited all social workers in the City of Bombay who were interested in the problem, to a conference at the Secretariat to consider how best to tackle the problem. At the conference Munshiji after an exhaustive survey of the problem and the then available facilities to tackle it made an appeal to all those present to co-operate with Government in dealing with the problem and sought their assistance in solving the following problems:

(*a*) Whether our City institutions should not serve only as exchanges for collecting and distributing destitute children and specialised institutions for such of them as have been selected as intellectually and normally fit for city life;

(*b*) Whether it would be better to keep these children under village conditions round about Bombay rather than put them in narrow stone walls of our City institutions;

(*c*) Whether it would not be better to evolve a system of village homes in the Province where children could be trained to be village workers;

(*d*) Whether it would be possible to give these children some kind of social background by giving them uniform cultural training of some kind.

At the end of his speech at the conference Munshiji summarised the whole scheme in these words:

"It would be easy to have a village colony round about Bombay for these children and to invite social workers in different parts of the Presidency to open village training

homes for such of them as have received a certain training in our village colony."

It is clear that Munshiji's idea was not merely to start a Home for Children at Chembur but also to make it a training centre for social workers.

Munshiji with the assistance of Shri L. V. Sathe, Architect, and Dewan Bahadur K. Ramaswami prepared the entire plan of the proposed buildings, and as soon as the land and moneys were made available the construction work was started under his personal supervision. By about the middle of September 1939 about thirty huts accommodating about 500 children became ready for occupation and in fact were occupied on the 16th of September.

After it was occupied, he saw to it that the scheme was worked as it was intended to be. The agricultural section of the Home was planned by Munshiji and its progress and the training it imparted to the Children of the Home was minutely supervised by him. At Munshiji's instance Government also transferred the management of the allied institution, the David Sassoon Industrial School, to the Children's Aid Society in November 1939.

The Congress Ministry resigned in November 1939 and Munshiji ceased to be the Vice-President of the Society. In recognition of his services to the Society, however, the Managing Committee at its meeting held in November 1939 elected him as the first Honorary Member of the Society. Munshiji continued his interest in the Society and at the invitation of the Managing Committee accepted the Chairmanship of the Organising Committee which mainly looked after the day to day working and organisation of the Children's Home at Chembur.

The Special Children's Day which was celebrated on December 3, 1939, was celebrated under the presidentship of H.E. Sir Roger Lumley, the President of the Society. His Excellency in his speech on the occasion while referring to Munshiji's services to the Society stated:

> I have had frequent opportunities of learning of the very keen interest taken by my late Home Minister in the problem of destitute and delinquent children and of the

tremendous drive he applied to the preparation and financing of this scheme. No trouble was too great to be taken and no detail too small for his attention.

Not less important, he succeeded in collecting the necessary money by mobilising the resources of Government, the Municipality and the public. We all of us owe Mr. Munshi a very great debt of gratitude for what he has succeeded in doing and I cannot help thinking that, for him, the settling of 800 children in pleasant rural surroundings under good supervision is a satisfactory result and all the reward he would wish for.

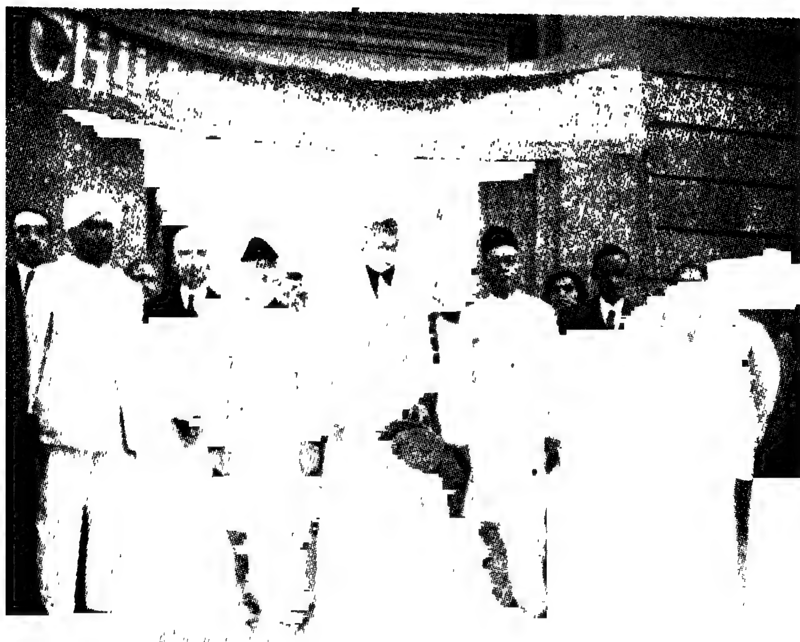
But this is not the end. More money will be required for this colony, and institutions are necessary for girls and for mentally defective children. The problems facing the Society remain considerable, and it must be a great source of satisfaction to every member, as it is to me that although you have lost your Vice-President you have acquired in Mr. Munshi, a Chairman of a Committee to organise the Society's work. I have no doubt that that co-operation which has been extended in the past will continue and I look forward to a further period of development and growth so that within a measurable period, this great and vital problem may be satisfactorily solved."

After amendment of the constitution providing for nomination of the Vice-President by Government, Government nominated Munshiji as Vice-President for the years 1940 and 1941.

In his message to the 13th Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Society H. E. Sir Roger Lumley referred to the great work of Munshiji during the preceding few years in the cause of the unfortunate children of this City and Province, and expressed confidence in the future of the Society and its institutions.

At the Fourteenth Ordinary General Meeting of the Society a special resolution was passed to acknowledge the services of Munshiji to the cause of Child Welfare in Bombay, and in particular to the Society.

Few, the world over, view children *en masse* as unimportant. But to one who feels, thinks and acts as the '*Guru*' in-



At the Opening Ceremony of the Children Aid Society's Chembur Home.
H. E. Sir Roger Lumley in the centre

Vedic times did, no child is ever unimportant—whatever the problem be, social, spiritual or physical that it presented. The *Guru* in ancient India combined the qualities of head and heart to the extent to which few today can have claim. Munshiji is one of the very few whose intellectual grasp of the essentially human issues involved in the affairs of men, women and children born into an adverse environment is unique; and his social sympathy for them has remained unchanging during the whole length of his many-sided career.

Munshiji's understanding of the problems of social reclamation in this country is as wide as it is keen and critical. He realised, early in his social welfare work, that the conditions governing the social problem groups in India are somewhat different from those obtaining in the West, and they are differently evaluated. We are essentially a rural people. Our social structure is still largely caste and craft centred. History, geography, and religion still provide answers to many whys and hows concerning many a problem, social reform and reclamation. Yet, in the bigger cities purely social and economic factors are beginning to challenge the serious attention of the architects and builders of the Great Indian Society.

The advent on the Indian horizon of a new form of impersonal imperialism ruthlessly pursued by the European nationals and the consequent intermingling of varied cultural and industrial life hastened the pace at which social problem conditions in India approximated to the world type. Basically, therefore, the characteristic features of social problem situations here and in the west appear to be similar. The difference, however, is in the extent to which the dominant casual factors assume significance critical to their solution. Thus, for instance, if destination, pure and simple, is the largest single determinant of social problem situations in this country, social and economic conflict plays the chief role in the social problem situations in the West.

Munshiji was quick to appreciate the tremendous importance of the factor of destitution in the aetiology of the juvenile social problem conditions. The way he tackled this problem

in the Bombay Presidency and the degree of success which attended his efforts make history on the handling of juvenile social problems in this country.

To recapitulate, briefly though; the history of the Children's Movement in Bombay, the main currents of which were controlled and directed by Munshiji between the years 1936 and 1940 a sane and solid foundation of a scheme for social reclamation of children was laid. Upon this rests firmly supported the superstructure of children's work in all its aspects in the Bombay Presidency. The series of conferences he convened for the purpose of enlarging the scope of children's work in Bombay City—the city where endless opportunities for adventures of care-free living or get-rich-quick are said to abound and to which the wayward, the truculent, the nomadic juveniles and youths flock from all ends and bounds of India and, together with the City-born, become "everyone's children but nobody's in particular"—the generous grants of land and money which his government made to the Bombay Children's Aid Society; and above all his deep and practical interest in the work of the Society and in social welfare and the keen and critical sense of social justice which he displayed in all his efforts stand out to speak for the achievements of a single individual which this country has seldom witnessed in living memory.

In this limitless yet fascinating work of social reclamation Munshiji was fortunate to have the active co-operation and practical sympathy of men and women whose names are outstanding in the history of Social Welfare work in this country.

Many were there, in body, mind and spirit; Munshiji only drew them to his cause just as a sweet smelling flower would attract a bee hovering around and about it to its juicy smell. But the drive and substance to this work none but Munshiji could give.

Munshiji cannot only discover but create as well, within the twinkling of an eye or the twisting of a finger, as it were, workers sincere and devoted as a mastercraftsman is to his work. Two men stand out in bold figure, against the bewitching back-

ground of social welfare work which Munshiji created. They are Shri Prabhashankar Bhatt and Shri L. V. Sathe, men who were probably social workers of leisure and by courtesy rather than by conviction before they were netted by Shri Munshiji into active and serious field work. The enthusiasm with which they plunged into the deep blue waters of juvenile social welfare, not only to shake them violently from their hitherto placid state but to create in them new currents, must have compensated many fold for the loss of leisure or gain from their profession. It was for them a call to duty coming from one whose missionary zeal for the work of reform and reclamation overwhelmed their inertia in matters outside their professional interests.

The year 1939 bids fair to go into the annals of Indian History as the Year of Redemption for the mass of social problem juveniles, particularly the group of them which the Sociologists and Psychologists are fond of calling 'Young Delinquents'. It was in 1939 that the Bombay Children's Aid Society, under the direction and guidance of Munshiji embarked upon a novel experiment in institutional care, control and training of social problem juveniles. This was an experiment which, outside the United States and a few European countries, none had dared to take the responsibility of initiating in a practical and workable manner. I refer to the establishment of the Chembur Children's Home.

The 'plotting' for this scheme and planning and designing of it were simple operations simpler done than told; so do we feel now, when we look back to the days in 1939 when Munshiji felt, thought and acted as if all at once. In the short span of a year Munshiji persuaded the Government of Bombay and the Bombay Municipal Corporation—mainly due to Smt. Lilavati Munshi's efforts—to make building grants of Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 1,00,000 respectively. The public of Bombay donated near about Rs. 75,000. Before September 1st of the year the 'huts' at Chembur, a suburban village of Bombay, were ready for occupation by the boys; and a programme for their care, control and training in a suitable vocation was in blue

print. The 'boys village' boomed forth in body, mind and spirit actually on the 16th of September.

The Chembur Children's Home is an 'open' colony, unlike other Reformatory Schools which are walled. In both layout and routine the Home is designed to minimise to the smallest the dangers and drawbacks of institutionalisation. The 'huts' in units of two constituted a 'hut family', the members of which were the group of 40 or odd boys, the matron and the House Master, who all lived and shared under the common roof the joys and sorrows of the hut family. There were the Hindu, the Muslim, Christian and Parsee lads, one and all messing in common, playing and praying in real community spirit and learning a common vocation. The Home is fitted to impart basic agricultural training with training in subsidiary agricultural vocations. The Chembur Children's Home is an experimental community school, a centre of education for living and education for life.

The novelty of the Home is its characteristic feature. It is manifested not only in the grand conception of 'farm colonies' which the Home is designed to translate into actuality but in every aspect of life and work of the Home. It was a conception which not only provided a theoretical background sound and solid enough to sustain workable measures for successfully dealing with social problem groups of children but proved most attractive to the boys. The slogan 'back to the land' has no newness about it. It has long come to be held, with or without adequate thought, the panaecea for the ills to which the bulk of the lower middle class educated unemployed has fallen a victim. But it is undoubtedly a new idea to plan to settle social problem children after they are trained over a period of three to five years to fit into rural society in 'farm colonies' of their own. The conception as well as the plan of execution of this scheme owes its genesis to Munshiji, to whose untiring effort, sympathy and understanding of the needs and problems of social problem of children the Chembur Children's Home itself owes its origin.

The Annual Report of the Bombay Children's Aid Society for the year 1940-41 says, "the scheme provides for placing a

carefully selected batch of 20 beggar boys on a seven acre plot of land for farming and related occupations . ... The colony boys live together. They cook their food and do their washing. A few of them are whole-timers on the colony farm. Others have to learn either spinning and handloom weaving or wood and cane work in addition to half day work on the farm . . . The batch of 20 boys constituting the Colony will farm for a period of three or five years. At the end of that period they will be assisted to migrate with the active co-operation of the Children's Aid Society and the Government of Bombay, to the Districts where cultivable land is available."

The lads at the Chembur Children's Home breathe the rural air and, unlike their brethren in the older and maximum security Reformatory Schools, live a freer life. Physical barriers to free and easy contact are conspicuous by their absence in the Home. Routine there is; but it is a routine of the community home, not of a correctional institution. Life in the Chembur Home is planned to make it largely rural, typical of the life in rural India but shorn of the depressing tradition over ways of thinking and doing. It is designed to move briskly, and in a manner that the lads when they leave here to make for themselves an independent and free living take with them a new hope and an enlarged social outlook.

With Munshiji as a lawyer few in this country are unacquainted. But it is probable that many there are who do not know him as a keen student of Criminology and Penology. He combines in him the attitude of a scientist and the zeal of a reformer with the caution and conservatism in social thinking that a lawyer is generally credited with. Munshiji accepts the fundamental thesis of all criminal law reform, that criminal justice must concern the individual criminal just as much as it concerns crime; that not only how crime is committed but why it is committed. The problem of dealing with crime and criminals is, in the last analysis, unitary, as indeed any attempt to handle them in compartments is not likely to prove more successful than in the past.

Munshiji's approach to the reform of penal law and prison practices is practical. His sensitivity to what is generally called 'public opinion' or the general sense of the community has largely to do with his thoughts and impulses about any problem or aspect of social reform. He believes, and rightly does, that the country is definitely not prepared to accept any revolutionary change either in law relating to crime or in the methods of punishing the deliberate law breaker. Spread of education and dissemination of knowledge of the scientific methods and results of dealing with criminals have yet to make headway in liberalising the outlook of the people and in enabling them to subject their prejudices and predetermined attitudes about crime and criminals to the test of reason. Unless this adverse environmental situation in which the law breaker still finds himself is removed he will continue to be shunned and shunted away by the community.

The sponsors of the First All-India Penal Reform Conference which was held in 1940 were fortunate to have Munshiji as the President of the Conference, and later to be the first President of the Indian Penal Reform League. The convener of the Conference, Shri Gopinath Srivastava, observed in his address to the Conference that "having known the work of the Bombay Ministry in the matter of Penal Administration, particularly in regard to juveniles, we naturally thought that Munshiji was the person most fitted to be the first President of the League". Munshiji's Presidential address dealt with practically every aspect of the reform of criminal and penal laws and of police and prison practices in India. He dealt much more elaborately with the problem of individualisation of justice as regards child delinquents, a field of service in which his contributions have been outstanding.

The chief merits of Munshiji's contributions, whether in the spheres of social reclamation of the children born into adverse environment or in the treatment of criminals and practice of criminal justice, lies in the passionate plea he makes for raising the status of the work to rank equally with all essential



AKHAND HINDUSTAN CAMPAIGN
Visit to the Golden Temple, Amritsar
(1941)

social services. The dominant motive must be social, not legal or merely humanitarian. The trend of social activity must be positive and purposeful; and the outcome of such activity must be a major revolution not only in the social habits and in the sense of social security equally for the law breaking and the law abiding persons but as regards the education of public opinion and public sentiments about crime and its prevention.

Better and bigger effort is necessary for giving his just share of national effort and honour as an architect as well as the builder of the India of tomorrow. I can only conclude by echoing with Anatole France, Munshiji's aspirations "Let us hope for these inconceivable beings (the perfect child and the perfect community) who shall one day develop out of man, as man has evolved from the brute. Let us salute these future prodigies."

XI

From 1941, however, Munshiji's efforts were concentrated on the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. In his all-India tour to preach the message of Akhand Hindustan, he came across men and movements of which, protected behind the walls of the Congress organisation, he had been hitherto unaware. These contacts inspired him to more strenuous efforts at embodying his ideals in the Bhavan. His first act was to strengthen the Sanskritic side of the Bhavan. The Mumbadevi Pathashala was enlarged, the Devidas Lallubhai Pathsala was added, and the courses of study were revised and the Bhavan embarked on a scheme of holding examinations for the titles of *Shastri* and *Acharya*—the first institution of its kind in Western India. Soon the examinations were recognised by the Punjab University. Another department, the Gita Vidyalaya, was started. In starting it Munshiji described its scope as follows:

> During the last five years the Bhavan has opened many departments. But the fact that the Bhavan is able to open the Gita Vidyalaya today, fills me with great pleasure. Our other departments are static; this one is dynamic. The others deal with knowledge alone; this will deal with knowledge transmuted into inspiration and action, which is the essence of *Bhagavad Gita*.

During the years 1944-45 he delivered a series of extension lectures on *Bhagvad Gita and Modern Life,* now published in a book form.

To celebrate the millennial centenary of the reign of Mulraj, the Chalukya king, who founded the kingdom of Gujarat, Munshiji founded the series *The Glory that was Gurjaradesa* and contributed research articles on *The Aryans of the West Coast,* in its first volume and wrote the whole third volume, *The Imperial Gurjaras,* being the political history of Gujarat and Rajasthan from 550 A.D. to 1300 A.D.

In 1944 Munshiji and Smt. Lilavati Munshi in addition to giving large donations, in money and books, to the Bhavan, presented all their works in Gujarati and English, aggregating to over 50 works, to the Bhavan, and the Lilavati Munshi Chair in Gujarati was founded from its income. Munshiji actually and generously helped by his steadfast collaborators in this venture secured the association of Babu Shri Bahadur Singhji Singhi, one of the Founder Members of the Bhavan. His munificent donations enabled the Bhavan to publish the famous Singhi Series of Jain literature and to purchase the Nahr Library of Indology, one of the best collections of research works in the country.

In 1943 Munshiji prepared a scheme for producing a History of India in ten volumes. With his usual energy, which Dewan Bahadur K. M. Jhaveri, once described as "all devouring", he turned the scheme into a practical reality. In association with Shri Ghanshyamdasji Birla, one of Munshiji's best friends, he founded the Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti, a branch of the Bhavan; procured funds from one of the Birla family trusts, the Krishnarpan Trust; engaged Dr. R. C. Majumdar, the eminent Indian Historian and the former Vice-Chancellor of the Dacca University, as its General Editor. In two years' time the scheme is half way to success. Four volumes are ready for the press and Messrs. Allen and Unwin, the world famous publishers, are bringing out the work in an English and American edition.

In 1944 Munshiji decided to commemorate the death of his great friend and helper in all philanthropic causes, Sheth Megji

Mathradas, by founding a College of Arts as a part of the Bhavan. In June 1946 the Megji Mathradas Arts College and the Narrondas Manordas Institute of Science were opened, and in close association with the Hansraj Morarji Public School, forms the education centre of Nav Gujarat at Andheri, a suburb of Bombay. Next year, building materials being available, the Bhavan will have a College of Commerce, named the Narrondas Manordas College of Commerce as part of the Bhavan.

Bombay is an international port. Munshiji's great ambition has been to establish a shrine of Indian Culture there. A scheme for a cenrtal building for the Bhavan is ready. Land, near Chowpatty, worth Rs. 6,70,000 has been purchased, and plans to have a large building with a Hall and Gita Mandir, and accommodation for the central activities of the Bhavan are in progress.

XII

But Munshiji is not merely an organiser of educational institutions. He is temperamentally a *Guru* of dynamic energy and limitless vision of Indian culture, reintegrated and powerful, capable of influencing the world. In all his work he is assisted by his wife Smt. Lilavati, in a manner reminiscent of Vasishtha and Arundhati—whose complete unity Munshiji has depicted in his play *Avibhakta Atma,* Undivided Soul. He has laboured at collecting money, men, materials and at organising colours, publication schemes, building places. He has stimulated others to study and conduct research and stolen moments to write works on research and deliver extension lectures. In 1946 alone, he delivered lectures on conditions in modern India (collected in *Ruin that Britain Wrought*) wrote one of the best received works on education styled *Creative Art of Life,* intended as a guide for teachers of the Bhavan. In fact it is a text book of creative education. Munshiji is not a mere educationist. He is more a general projecting his powers of organisation and his leadership in the field of education. He works hard, extracts hard work from everyone; stimulates productivities by example precept and often—to the despair of his co-workers—with authoritarian

impatience and irresistibility. There is no escaping him or his orders, his smiles or frowns, his plans or his inspiration; and he sweeps all before him by his abiding love for his colleagues. He works and he claims work from others; and forgives everyone but the idler and the fraud.

Every constructive activity of Munshiji is so aligning itself with the Bhavan, and the Bhavan is dominated by the central idea which inspires its author's art and work—the Creative Art of life. And thus does he define the creative art of life:

> "Creative Education is the art of self-sculpture. Therefore, formative education is the only real education. The programme of such an education has now been sketched.
>
> The student must have faith in the Motherland. He must be trained to appreciate the permanent values of our Culture and try to live up to them.
>
> Of such a training, the primary aim must be the development of the personality of the student; of an all-sided responsiveness to human relations; and of an urge to find self-fulfilment. Of any programme of Creative Education for India, the first step is the study of Sanskrit; the second, is to view Indian Culture as an unbroken process; the third, is to develop the powers of expression by a study of literary masterpieces and the recurring recital of a great work, preferably one which as a scripture has an universal appeal.
>
> The technique of such an education must involve the adoption of the *guru* and the *shishya* attitude by the teacher and the taught.
>
> A student is to start sculpturing himself; he is to develop a personality; he is to absorb the best in Indian Culture. But what is to be the life-pattern on which the artist is to mould and shape and chisel his life-energy? What is to be the ideal of benefection in this case, the high-self-fulfilment at which he has to aim?
>
> The art of Creative life-energy as already stated is to self-sculpture oneself as to attain the progressive 'integration of his personality, leading ultimately to its Absolute Integration.
>
> Absolute Integration lies in a man developing a dynamic personality so that all limitations disappear from

this individual nature. Personality so developed reaches out to Divine proportions, and becomes the effective instrument of a Force of illimitable Perfection."

And this aim is now embodied in the aims and objects of the Bhavan.

Munshiji is among the great three educationists of contemporary India. He lacks Malaviyaji's education and self-sacrifice and immense creative influence on modern India. He is denied the profound scholarship and the sweep of philosophic vision which characterises Dr. Sir S. Radhakrishnan. But Munshiji has the same burning love of Indian culture, the same proud vision of India's future destiny—the legacy of Arvindian discipleship. In organising power, in administrative capacity and skill to impart energy and extract productivity, however, he is more thorough going, and perhaps more effective. And certainly more versatile than either. He owes his inspiration to Aravinda and Gandhiji. His reverence for Malaviyaji has perhaps given him many inspiring moments. But he is a typical product of Gujarat—the land of Shri Krishna.

His *daemon* is irrepressible. He can work, create and organise. He can also make money, but not in such a way as to stifle the Brahmin in him. He can practise Yoga, teach the Bhagvad Gita and apply precepts to the worldliest aspect of life. He can be aristocratic and yet inspiring. He can receive a blow with a smile, and deal a deadlier one with equally a cheerful smile. And he can laugh, and joke—even at his own expense. He can be flippant, gay, even dangerously like his *Prithvi Vallabh.* He could love in defiance of convention and still can sublimate married life into a thing of beauty rarely found outside poetry.

He loves luxurious comfort, but enjoys jail life with equal gusto. He can write the most heart-rending tragedy and a ribald farce with equal creative power.

His idealism and energy can attract Gandhiji; his Yogic urge can evoke a paternal response from Shri Aravinda. His

practical sense and capacity can draw to him such men of divergent perception as Pandit Nehru, Rajaji, Sardar Patel and Sir Chimanlal Setalvad. All men come to him and leave dazzled, refreshed or disturbed. His romantic flame makes him the admired of the old and young. And little children—even of the destitute and delniquent sort—who come into close contact—of course when he has the time—come unto him and feel the glow of a rare sunshine in their little, unsophisticated souls.

4

The Man and His Message

I

Munshiji in several of his works lays emphasis on the dynamic unity of all our powers as a first step towards self-realization. He himself also is a 'little dynamo'' as Dr. Krishnalal Shridharani, the well-known Indian journalist who recently arrived from America calls him. Giving his impressions of a visit which Dr. Shridharani recently paid him at Delhi, he writes:

> One evening, recently, during the preliminary session of the Constituent Assembly in New Delhi, I drove up to the Birla House with Munshiji. The idea was to spend a quiet evening of walk and talk together at his temporary residence in the nation's capital. We had so much to talk about since we were meeting after an interval of twelve years.
>
> But before we could begin, a deputation of Sikhs arrived to consult Munshiji as to their probable status in Section B. The stalwart bearded lions of the north had come to the tiny vegetarian Gujarati because they shared with him a common dream—the dream of Akhand Hindustan. The Sikhs saw their communal suicide in Pakistan. The Brahmin saw the dissolution of the Hindu heritage, the oldest continuous civilisation, if Pakistan materialised.
>
> The small group proved that antipathy to Pakistan made the strangest bed-fellows. Here were the Sikhs, beturbaned and clad in the northern garbs, giving an impression of slow-moving massive physical strength. And here was a little plainsman lawyer behind dark glasses in a Gandhi-cap-Munshi-style. The versatile mind in the volatile body dominated the scene by the mongoose tactics of agility. But before he could settle all the points with the logic of a good lawyer . . .
>
> . . . The telephone rang. Sir N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar was on the phone. The little dynamo sprang. The

Princes' Negotiating Committee had thrown a new monkey wrench. They kept the wire burning for half an hour. Forgotten was I, forgotten were the Sikhs. It was a new development in an atmosphere surcharged with new developments, and something had to be done about it and quickly. The Sardar had to be contacted . . .

No sooner had the Sikhs left than did a group arrive to implore Munshiji to take up their litigation. Again I was forgotten, and so were the Sikhs and the Princes, Negotiating Committee and Sir N. Gopalaswami and the Constituent Assembly. Now Munshiji was absorbed in the case at hand. In the meanwhile he had gotten up once more to take the phone to accept a dinner invitation for the next evening from a Maharajah.

Later on Munshiji assured me that he was going to settle down to write a story before going to bed. I was impressed by this drama of American efficiency in a country where people seldom get up once they have settled down to talks unending. I marvelled at his ability to turn on and turn off his concentration at will, like a water-fossette. I thought that if I could open his mind without injuring him permanently, I would find a honeycomb, full of pigeonholes which harboured his various interests in water-tight compartments.

Munshiji explained to me that the ease with which he could get absorbed in a subject at a moment's notice was acquired with great difficulty. Ever since his adolescence he had strived hard to develop the powers of concentration through the *Yogic* exercise of *Dhyana*. As a boy he was fascinated by the stories about *Rishis* and *Maharshis*, and through subconscious as well as conscious, striving he had aspired to be one. But he wanted to streamline the ancient concept of a *Rishi* to suit the needs of the twentieth century. He dabbled in spiritism for a while, but gave it up since *Moksha* was not his main concern. He was using *Dhyana* to acquire greater efficiency so that he could achieve ends here and now.

As I look back to the Munshi novels I have read, I realise that this *Rishi* theme runs like a thread through most of them. A man of ambition generally seeks a magic formula of increasing power. But Munshiji's pre-occupation with the *Rishi* formula should be viewed in a social context as well as in the personal context. It is clear that Munshiji's emotional content is provided by the Vedic Aryavarta. He wants to recreate the glory that was 'Ind.,

The difference between a proud man and a vain man is this: a proud man is confident of what he is, while the vain man is proud of what he is not. Munshiji is essentially a proud man, proud of what he is. He is a Brahmin and he swears by Aryavarta. He is a Gujarati and he sings the praise of greater Gujarat. His loyalty to Gujarat can be explained in another way also. Just as a cow needs a tether, so does Munshiji need the centre of Gujarat to encompass the perimeter of Indian Nationalism. His early novels and later historical essays have resurrected a cultural concept of Gujarat which embraces even Rajputana. Mahatma Gandhi made Gujarat proud in its present tense by creatnig heroes out of dust. Munshiji made Gujarat proud in its past tense by revealing heroes from under archeological dust.

I recall that during my high school days at Dakshinamurti in Bhavnagar I read Munshiji's novels more avidly and with a greater sense of excitement than those of any other Gujarati novelists. For one thing, he can tell a story well. Secondly, his characters are alive and not wooden or stereotyped. And his heroes and heroines were love-hungry and power-hungry. They were always doing things and going places instead of mooning and crooning like the heroes and heroines in other novels and poems saturated by the spirit of Sufism. Munshiji's men regarded the world as to be stormed and taken, in utter contrast to the general Gujarati spirit of negation and asceticism and renunciation. They were the very things that young breasts aspired to be.

I read Munshiji's novels for all these reasons. But I read them also because the man who wrote them had become a legend in Gujarat and had fascinated me. I read the novels, in other words, as much for their stories as for their story-teller. The way Munshiji became a legend in Gujarat seems a simple device to me now that I have had the experience of exciting educational places in India as well as in the Western World during my twelve years of *Vanavasa* in America, but then it was a big thing. Munshiji lived like a hero of one of his novels, and thus proved the hackneyed aphorism that a novel is nothing but the autobiography of the author.

Let me be precise. Munshiji's characters displayed a marked proclivity towards love and power. I venture to suggest that the love complex and the power complex constitute the major overtones of Munshiji's personality. The

results of the power complex are evident. The once obscure and impecunious Gujarati lawyer is well on his way to be an all-India figure, and this is by no means the journey's end. The love complex led him to be not only the *enfant terrible* of the Gujarati letters; it led him to love-marriage.

By this single stroke Munshiji became the talking point of Gujarat. He symbolised the secret yearning of the youth in Gujarat which was then pre-occupied (and which, perhaps, is still occupied) with the problem of the incompatible marriage between an educated boy and the uneducated girl selected by his parents. One has only to look into the novels and short stories and poems of that time to convince oneself that that was the central social problem in Gujarat when Munshiji boldly solved it in his own life. Indeed the prudes were shocked, but that did not prevent them from reading Munshiji's books and talking about him. Instead it whetted their appetite. For we secretly admire a man who dares do things that we dare not do.

Munshiji, the man, is a curious blend of the old and the new, the provincial and the universal. The glory of Gujarat and of the ancient Āryavarta constitute his frame of reference, but, at the same time, Western and most modern modes of social relations constitute the code of his conduct. That is why tradition-bound Maharajahs and magnates find a sense of security even in Munshiji's reform movement. That is why the radical youth of Gujarat has the feeling that he is with them also.

An engaging talker, Munshiji holds his own in any group and relishes the company of those who are good conversationalists themselves. Many times he dominates the scene, and thus creates the impression of constant self-possession and aggressiveness. But I have a sneaking suspicion that these technique of his can be a shell for his innate shyness. He is awe-struck for the first few minutes whenever he meets a new person of note. But give him those first few minutes, let him overcome the shock . . . then Munshi is Munshi.

II

But when one looks deeper, Munshiji in his personality and achievements is a typical Renaissance man.

Every renaissance throws up an ideal type of man whose virtues and defects render him distinct equally from the average

man and the type that is matured in decadence. Beyond a vague sense of exhilaration, the average man betrays no symptom of being affected by the fuller life around him. But the ideal type partakes intensely of it. He will not deprive himself of any aspect of it. The whole or nothing is his motto. All his nerves quiver in achieving. He is seized by the daemon, and his frenzy is non-human because it is so completely vital. On the other hand, he is unequal, inconsistent and partial. His very activity will not allow him the rest in which values are nursed, ideas schematised into a system, and contemplation generates poise of the soul. Being ever on the search, he does not reach. Having perpetually strained, he is not easy. Life has touched him in the raw, and he cannot be mellow. Ripeness is nothing to him because to him living is all, its start, course and the end. He cannot afford to exude flavour all the time as he is busy emitting glow. His arc is never closed.

Thus it is that Abelard will not be content with his learning but shall ever be hungry of love; Leonardo will not be exhausted by the Last Supper but shall be engineer, architect, sculptor, flutist, experimenter and shall still dream of the youth he loved and frame him in the sad prototype of Gioconda; Isabella d'Este, Aretino, Erasmus will take the universe for their own and specialise in omniscience; a Ram Mohan and Ranade will straddle the East and the West like Colossus; Tagore will write novels, stories, dramas, found a University, plunge into politics, comment on the Upanishads, spread co-operative societies, start shipping, jute and insurance concerns with equal casualness.

Munshiji is in that grand tradition of the Renaissance man. His literary activities, his participation in politics, his brilliance as administrator, educationalist, journalist and as an organiser of art forms, dance-shows and dramas fail to close the list of his interests. He is all that, and more besides. His energy spills out in abandon. He is in the full stream of India in the making.

In such renaissance many contradictions are easily resolved. Action fuses some, and realism does others. Yet a few remain, and they are those that have their origins in the conflict of the

two age-spirits. Plato must be squared with the inductive intellect, or Aristotle with Christian theology; here, the *Upanishads* have to be synthesised with reformist zeal. It is not easy to keep balance on a rocking bridge or on moving planes. Many have been thrown back while others have been pushed out. Those who can still stand, do so, on the strength and vigour of their individuality. In India, the *Bhagavad Gita* is handy. It is the philosophy of the renaissance, and so it has inspired Tilak, Gandhi and Munshi. For those who have no such consolation, it may as well be democratic socialism. Jawaharlal will not read the *Gita*, and yet he shall integrate himself on this level of living. But that residual conflict inherent in the renaissance man seldom appears on the surface. It is usually lost in the flow. Like a particle beneath the skin of the oyster hugging the bottom deep beneath the tide, it makes pearls, and the costliest pearls are never pure. Munshiji has followed the Mahatma, and deviated from him. The Mahatma loves him.

This near-complete synthesis is reflected on the levels of faith and knowledge. When faith is splintered by theology, renaissance-spirit collects it through confidence in man and in his future. If knowledge is fragmented by specialisms, the renaissance man gathers them by the unity of knowledge. Man and knowledge in the context of life make up culture. Munshiji is a man of culture. Is he a great scholar? No. And yet his scholarship is validated by his culture, his sense of values, his feeling for the whole. Is he a perfect man? No. And yet his imperfections receive their sanction from his quest for synthesis. Has he mastered all aspects of culture? No. And he values culture above all. Is he a pure Indian in the sense of leading a purely Brahminical life? No. And yet for him Indian culture is the peak of Indian endeavour. One who has known him will, however, be not surprised. Munshiji lives, thinks and acts like a cultured person, synoptically.

III

But there is something more fundamental about the man and his message. He is among the great thinkers and creative artists of modern India fighting ceaselessly against the prevail-

ing inertia. His thought represents the eternally idealistic reaction to the false philosophy of life which has moved us away from our Indian moorings. His writings, therefore, have an unique quality. They lift us up from the spiritual stagnation in which we have long sunk, the sterile scepticism and hedonism of the West, which he calls Westernism, and restores to us our faith in the absolute and permanent values of Aryan Culture.

Munshiji's great contribution to the history of our culture is his tireless efforts to bring back the fundamentals of Aryan Culture to us. It is an article of faith with him that the Indian Renaissance cannot be brought about without the alchemy of the creative art of life which India perfected in the past. Indian Culture to him is not a civilisation, not a religious or social system, not a philosophy only. He views it as the movement of a Central Idea flowing through time, absorbing alien influences, some times running underground but always inspiring individuals and movements to express it under the changed conditions of their time. He says:

> In each period it has expressed itself, with easily ascertainable permanence, in the life of our great men, in the output of our art and literature, in our solution of vital problems. This Central Idea is a living reality. Men have derived exquisite joy by living it. It has passed through fresh coverings of each age. These coverings, the out-worn sheaths are made the objects of research by our modern scholars. But the moving Reality has passed from covering to covering throwing up great men and recurring movements with every age. This reality must be studied in forces, movements, motives and ideas which have persisted through time. It must be rediscovered by each generation, and above all, lived.

Although Munshiji imbibed the essential impulses of the West, the core of his being is fundamentally Aryan. While he drank deep at the fountain of European literature—Greek, French and English—his creative vision has been nourished by the *Vedas*, the *Mahabharat* and the ancient history of *Aryavarta*. The *Yogasutra* and the *Gita* have profoundly in-

fluenced him and throughout his writings runs an undercurrent of their teachings.

Thus does he describe the great Epic:

> The *Mahabharat* is not a mere epic. It is the greatest creative factor in shaping and re-integrating Indian Culture. Its heroes and heroines have lived in men's imagination for centuries. Its approach has moulded outlook. Its idioms and figures of speech have worked their way into all Indian languages. Every stage and sphere of life has been provided; its episodes, its situations, ideals and wisdom are so true of life that change cannot affect their appropriateness or beauty. And they have inspired every art, literature, thought, and belief in every generation.

The so-called modern education, according to Munshiji, has impaired the sensibility of mind, destroyed originality of thought and created an attitude of intellectual servility to the West. Most of our intellectual ills can be remedied only by a thorough overhaul of our educational system. Like Tagore he is not averse to the study of foreign languages. He would broad-base the educational structure as much as possible on the essential elements of Indian Culture. He has taught us what Indian Culture stands for in the context of world cultures.

> Indian Culture is a challenge to Westernism. It recognises three fundamental and inalienable positions.
>
> First, every man has his own individual nature, *Swabhava.*
>
> Second, Self-fulfilment for him is only attainable on the lines of its own law or *swadharma.*
>
> Third, Self-fulfilment for him lies in co-ordinating his faculties under the impelling urge of this law by a course of self-discipline and thereby attaining an integration of all his powers which we call personality.

He thus declares what the absolute integration of the human personality is:—

> Absolute Integration lies in a man developing a dynamic personality so that all limitations disappear from his individual nature. Personality so developed reaches out to Divine proportions, and becomes the effective instrument of a Force of illimitable Perfection.

Munshiji neither rejects science nor harks back to the primitive society, nor does he stand for revivalism. The Culture in its fundamentals has to be recaptured by each generation afresh. The enormous technical advance of modern sciences has to be incorporated into our life.

> Education, if it is the creative art of self-sculpture, is also a means of social adjustment. Its products, therefore, must have the latest equipment and skill to deal with the problems of their age. They have to live in their times and serve their country and the world with the best weapons available. Education as a creative art shapes the man to perfection; but even the Perfect has to deal with environments. In doing so they cannot be behind others in matters relating to material equipment.

What passes as the modern Western civilisation is on a closer scrutiny organised violence and brutality; a mad race for power and wealth; a total enslavement of human spirit. For Munshiji the progressive development of the human personality is real progress. He wants change, not transformation. He, therefore, thus formulates the relation between change and tradition:

> First, no ancient form or attitude should be sacrificed to passion for change;
>
> Second, no form or attitude should be retained if it could be replaced by another which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of the Culture.
>
> The old world must change but the new world must not cease to be the effective expression of our Culture.

We are at cross-roads; either we regain our vision or perish for the want of it. The living idea of Aryan Culture should indwell us. It must bring the inner integration of self and inform our literature, art and even politics. Without cultural reintegration merely social, economic or political programme are doomed to failure.

He is not content with mere philosophic exposition of his message. He is a student of Patanjali and Shri Krishna and enumerates the process by which this supreme integration, *śamsiddhi,*—self-realisation—can be attained. Here are the

steps by which according to him a man can rise to Absolute Integration.

I. When a man concentrates all his powers to find out his innate Truth;

When he fuses his thought, word and deed to express himself one with the lines of his own truth;

When he trains himself to express his own Truth by word or deed or silence, fearlessly in disregard of consequences, even at the cost of death,

he attains the dynamic unity of his powers.

II. Having attained this unity when he tries to make every deed of his perfect,

When he casts out anxiety to secure results and is neither eager for victory nor afraid of defeat;

When he offers his very impulse, thought, word and deed as a votive offering to God;

When he overcomes, by constant self-discipline, greed and fear and lust and wrath;

When he works in life as a force of nature, unhalting and unresting;

When in doing so he surrenders himself to God and lives but as his instrument;

When he sees Him in all and all in Him,

he becomes a supreme artist of life.

This is a message of endeavour and resistance to non-self. It is not a metaphysical system. It is a perception born of his struggles for incessant self-discipline, a glimpse of which one gets in his works.

Munshiji's teachings and life are aspects of the same growing dynamic unity, which he is struggling to attain in life, by the practice of *yogic* methods applied to the affairs of life. But he fully realises his weaknesses. He knows he has not scaled even the lower reaches of the heights of Perfection. No one, throughout, has been so conscious of his limitations, and no author has expressed them so frankly in his works.

But the Vision of Perfection has been floating before Munshiji's eyes since 1930, co-ordinating and shaping his life. This hard-headed, shrewd, practical lawyer-politician is at heart a mystic. He sees Masters in Shri Aravinda and Mahatma Gandhi, not for their achievements but their surrender to God.

That is what makes him so happy, so indifferent to praise or blame, so superior to worries which afflict us all. Twenty-five years ago he preached the Joy of Life as the predominant note of modern life. At any rate he has extracted joy from every situation, during health and illness, when he was popular and unpopular, when in power or when refusing to accept it.

And thus does he formulate the Law of Moral Causation without following which dynamic unity is but barren struggle.

> Power, achievement, riches, vigour, and the true view of life, when attained in the fullest and lasting measure, makes for the Perfect Man.
>
> They are attained only in accordance with the inescapable absolute and eternal Law which governs relations between mind and conduct in all beings in all ages and conditions.
>
> The law operates in the following manner:
>
> Lasting power comes only to him who at all moments is true to himself, that is one in thought, word and deed;
>
> Lasting riches only come to him who achieves absolute honesty;
>
> Lasting vigour only comes to him who does not allow his powers physically and mentally to go waste.
>
> A true view of life is given only to him who gives up all possessions.
>
> The general view is that violence gives power, dispersal of faculties secures achievements, dishonesty yields riches; sex indulgence yields creative vigour, and possessions provide the true end of life. That view is false and self-destructive. According to the Law, by the sacrifice of these commonly accepted means only can the objectives be really achieved.
>
> The erroneous view of Perfection arises on account of three basic human limitations, viz., attachment, fear and repulsion.
>
> When these limitations are transcended, all misery and weakness disappear, and personality becomes completely integrated. Then Perfection is attained.

This Law of Moral Causation is the result of perception which the study of the *yoga* and of human nature has given Munshiji.

By enunciating the law underlying the teachings of *Yoga* Munshiji has provided a firm scientific basis for the moral order. The law is as old as the *Upanishads*, it has been only represented to us with a convincing directness.

Munshiji has scanned the life of Masters and he thus describes the process by which they all attained self-realisation. "In such case the art lay—First, in stopping the dispersal of life-energy by bringing it under the direction of one active idea; Second, in integrating personality by overcoming greed and lust, fear and hate, by the mind attaining a wide calm which knows no misery; Third, merging the personaltiy into Perfection which throbbs in tune with Universal life."

And this is the Art of Life for which Indian Culture stands and which Munshiji has preached through novels and dramas, essays, addresses and works of serious literature.

> This Art which these masters follow and the way of life it prescribes are *sanatana,* for it is not parochial, nor restricted to an age, but eternal and inevitable. It knows no difference of race or country. It is based on something fundamental in human nature. It is *Dharma*, for it upholds the whole existence, both individual and social.
>
> It is Aryan Culture.
>
> Firstly, because the Aryans, of all mankind, found it, gave it a shape and meaning and left it as a message of undying strength;
>
> Secondly, because, it was first practised and perfected in Aryavarta.
>
> It is Indian Culture, for India is Aryavarta, for here it has grown, thriven and been preserved. Here, it has moulded life and social movements. Here, it has been lived by great men who have found the highest self-fulfilment in expressing its ideas and forging the collective will in their light.
>
> The Art which these masters have cultivated is Indian in the sense that they were all born in India, drew inspiration from the fundamentals of Aryan Culture and were the architects of the life and culture of the India of their day. It is Indian; for India has no future except as its expression. But the Art is open to every one who learns it.

Throughout the range of his creative art Munshiji has been a prophet of new age. Except poetry—although his life has attained rhythm and beauty of a song—he has touched all branches of prose. In about fifty-five works of art he has worshipped the cult of Beauty and of Strength. He has courageously defied conventional art and led the revolt against the Sunday School morality, prudery, and all forms of hypocrisy which is, in fact, moral cowardice. All his writings are characterised by a refreshing iconoclastic note. His characters, infinitely fascinating as they are, embody the dreams, aspirations and spirit of Aryan Culture. Whether in novels or history, the vision of the ancient Aryavarta lives, a living, breathing world, not of yesterday but of today broadening into to-morrow.

Although Munshiji has written works of abiding beauty and interest he is much greater than his works. He has acclaimed again and again that "To *be* is greater than to *do*". And for those of us who know him intimately he is greater than his greatest achievements. He is in the long line of the Great Brahmins who from the times immemorial formed the priesthood of spirit ceaselessly working for enlightenment and culture. Youthful and profound, fearless and penetrating he reflects the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya.

"Munshiji at 60" sounds rather unconvincing! His dynamic thought represents a revolt against all conventional and obscurantist forces and an onward urge for better forms of life. He himself has drunk deep at Aryan Culture and will remain, like it, ever young, vital and resilient. Imbued with humanity, sympathy, tenderness, and understanding his rich and vivid personality radiates love and joy. To all who have come to him he has been a force, an idea, an inspiration and an institution in matters literary and cultural. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which stands for cultural re-integration is perhaps Munshiji's greatest achievement. Tagore's Shanti Niketana, Malaviyaji's Hindu University and Munshiji's Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan are working for the same ideals—the fusion of the ancient learning and modern intellectual aspirations to reintegrate a new Indian culture.

He thus defines reintegration:—

> The process of cultural reintegration is like the process of nutrition which regenerate the living tissues from day to day. A student of Culture first studies it and becomes a reception centre. He then absorbs its finest elements, if the culture is not alien. This makes him true to himself, his country and his culture. He, in the next stage, tries to live upto them under the conditions of the age. As soon as he does this, he becomes an active centre of reintegration. He radiates the permanent values of his culture; influences his environments; and produces a healthy renaissance by establishing contact with alien influences.
>
> He then grows rich in personality and dynamic effectiveness. And the Culture passing through the crucible of the student's individual nature, will be an organic creation fresh with new life and tenacious and powerful with its ancient strength. This is re-integration.

No tribute to Munshiji is complete without a reference to the two ladies who profoundly influenced his personal, intellectual and creative life—his mother and his wife. Munshiji writes in his autobiography vividly about his mother 'Jijima' who nourished and reared the dreams and gifts of her only son. She was a wonderful soul; a friend, philosopher and guide to him and to all who came to her. Some aspects of Munshiji's forceful personality—such as his defiance of orthodox, courageous persistence, firmness for a just cause and above all his love of Aryan Culture—are built up by 'Jijima' of whom he can say—

> "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
> And humble cares, and delicate fears,
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,
> And love, and thought, and joy."

One of the finest works of Munshiji is *Shishu ane Sakhi,* an unique experiment in autobiography. It is a prose-poem, its sound cadence and unsurpassed magic of words reveal a story of great love and beauty. Munshiji has dealt with this most intimate subject with his characteristic candour. Srimati Lilavati in whom he found a twin soul has richly influenced



'Jijima' the Mother who made Munshiji (1936)

his mind, art, life as a whole. "The intensive indwelling of the Undivided Soul" as Munshiji puts it in both of them produced some of the finest works of art. *Sishu ane Sakhi* is a literary Taj Mahal, so rich, eloquent, colourful and exciting, embodying the life of the Munshis. As Munshiji has romantically stated about it. "Had they met a tragic end and not come together in marriage, poets would have written poetry about them. But like the end of a badly woven drama, the happy end came abruptly." And what would have been poetic material for authors is now poetry in life; a flame of mutual admiration, devotion and self-surrender; a thing of beauty. "I bind my soul with yours, I bind my bone with bone, the flesh with flesh, the skin with skin—is with the Munshis, not an aphorism of the *Grihya Sutra* but a living reality. And from out of this unique experience of realistic unity and practical partnership he has given to the modern world with its farmyard morals, a new message of hope.

> I have no admiration for this form of *Brahmacharya*. If men and women are going to be led to perfection by developing creative vigour, sublimation of the sex urge cannot be left as a process to be pursued by a man or woman singly. In the past man or woman has sought his or her individual perfection. In the future marriage must mean the common effort to scale the heights of an undivided perfection.
>
> Paraskara Grihyasutra, when it postulated complete unity of man and wife, made no compartments to this unity. If a Dante can sublimate his sex urge and if Mira can lead her whole life in contemplation of the Divine, why should not modern men and women, when they fall in love, jointly sublimate their sex urge by creative concentration on an undivided soul inspiring two bodies If during the period of their early contact, they divert the joint torrents of love into an undivided eternal identity between them, their search for unity would not end with marriage but begin with it. Actually the need for real conscious effort at dissolving the hidden divergences in taste and temperaments, differing emotions, varying degrees of idealism have to be welded into one under the pressure of the 'indwelling Undivided Soul' which lives

and moves and has its being in two different human bodies.

I know that many will consider this as poetry. But was not the love of Dante for Beatrice equally idealistic, equally foolish-looking to the sordid and the vulgar? It is not easy for a single individual to sublimate sex urge; it may prove very difficult for a man and woman to join day and night in this process of alchemy. But the day of the solitary Brahmachari is gone; women cannot be looked upon any longer as the 'gateway of hell'. For the modern men and women with their highly developed powers, if sex sublimation has to be accomplished, this is the only way. It will lead to great creative vigour. It is not based only on a common will to pleasure; such will, in their case, becomes an incident of the sublimated activities of their soul. Emotional, intellectual and aspirational partnership leads to the evolution of a single personality through which dynamic unity can express itself. It is the creation of Beauty which surrounds the conception of Radha-Krishna and Sita-Rama and the grandeur which we call Ardha-Narishwar. It is Brahmacharya, following the path of Brahma."

. . . It was said of Shukracharya, the great Bhrugu, an ancestor from whom mythologically Munshiji is believed to have descended—

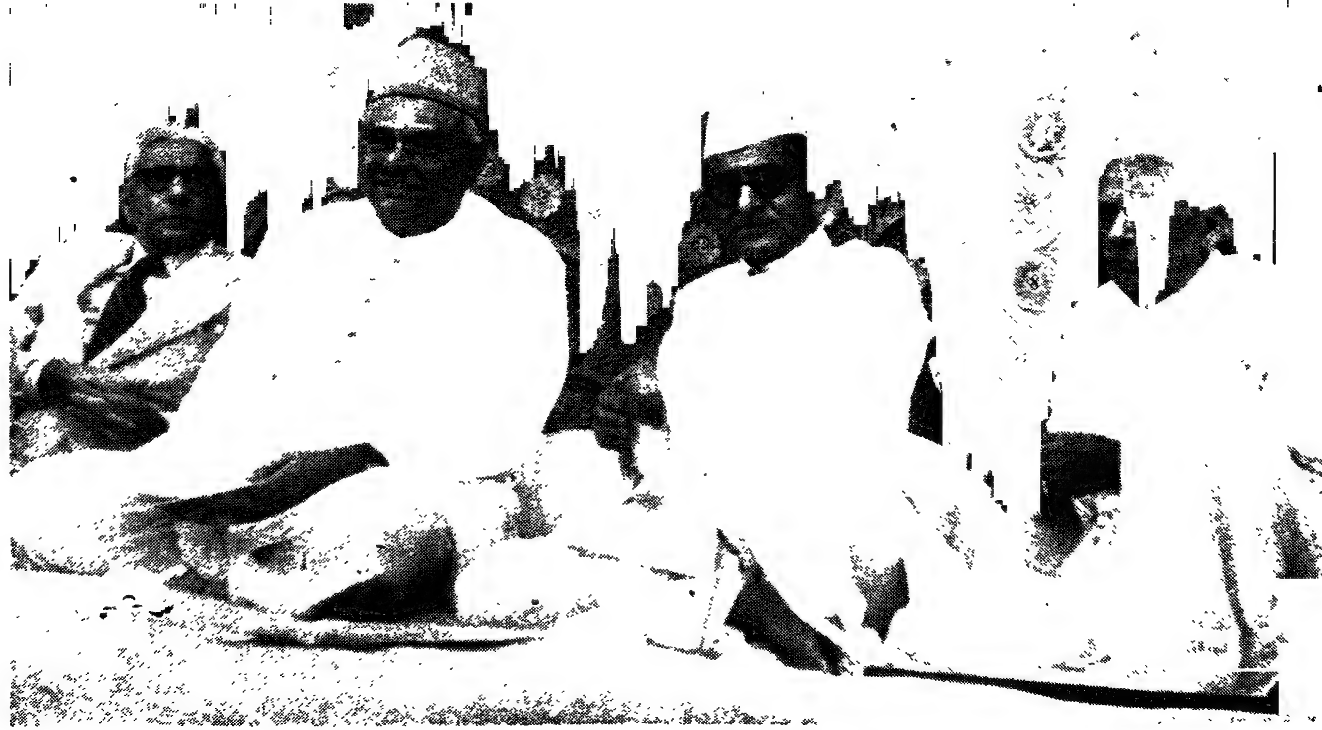
Hima-kundamrnalabham daityanam paramam gurum
Sarva-shashtra pravoktaram Bhargavam pranama
myaham.

With some slight change and imitating the rhetoric of the Sanskrit poet we can offer a similar tribute to Munshiji.

To this Bhrugu's son,
This Brahman, so ancient and yet so modern,
This teacher of many-sided learning,
At times, severe as winters' snowy blast,
At times, playful as a flower in the breeze,
And again at times, tender as the tendril,
Which in the flower stem resides,
Who to us, the hedonistic brood of the barbarian West,
Doth teach the path of self-fulfilment,
To this great Guru
I bow.

APPENDIX

(Though the volume was presented to Munshiji on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, the editors feel that the replies given by him at two of the functions held in honour of his sixtieth birthday, one at the public meeting at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on 7th *January,* 1947 *and the other at the Reception at the Taj Mahal Hotel on* 9th *January* 1947, *would be a suitable addition.)*



HEERAK MAHOTSAV CELEBRATIONS on 7-2-1947

Sir H. V. Divatia, Shri Pranlal Devkaran Nanjee, Munshiji and Dewan Bahadur K. M. Jhaveri

I

I Look Back

(Being Munshiji's reply at the Public Meeting at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on 7th *January,* 1947.)

I don't know really how to thank you. If I was speaking on something other than myself, if I was addressing a court about other people's affairs, if I was combating some one or something, I would have a lot to say. But I am crushed under the weight of your affection. The most appropriate medium of thanks for me would have been *mauna;* but my silence has not the positive eloquence of a mute sage; I must, therefore, rest content with such speech as I can command.

You say that I have reached my sixtieth year. It may be right. But I feel today as much a beginner as when I began. Like a rolling stone, which gathers no moss, I have gathered no knowledge, no experience, no wisdom; but unlike the stone, I have gathered friends, a large accumulation of them. And I thank God for it.

One of the volumes of my autobiography I have styled "The Steep Climb". The whole of my life has been a steep climb; a weak childhood to a tolerably good health at 60; from an eating house costing Rs. 5/- a month to comparative luxury; from complete obscurity to some recognition; from inability to express two sentences to about half a hundred volumes in every branch of prose. But God has been great; I have climbed, no doubt, strenuously, but laughing, playing, running; sometimes stumbling. On the way I have picked up flowers; and every morn has brought me new joy.

I have ceaselessly fought frustration, despair, inertia. I have fought every philosophy of life which I considered false. I gained success, but I was never happy with it. I made money, but I could not remain satisfied by making it all the time. I was popular in 1930; over a hundred thousand men came to receive me at the Victoria Terminus. I have been unpopular;

critics have called me a traitor to the country and to Gandhiji —the one Master whose affection and confidence I have cherished more than most things in the world. My writings have been admired and condemned.

I am curiously made. I am indifferent to praise or blame. When people talk about me, I generally feel in the words of a motto on a college in Scotland: "They have said. What did they say? Let them say." But it is not the result of vanity; this attitude has been acquired by me by a long and strenuous struggle. In the words "indifferent to praise or censure" used by Shri Krishna, I have always found the greatest of all strength.

I have been like most men, concealing thoughts, often acting contrary to what I thought proper. But since the earliest day my memory can go back to, I have hated divergence between thought, word and deed. A mysterious stream of faith and enthusiasm has arisen only in those few blissful moments when I found unity between them. Then only did I feel that there was no defeat over which I could not triumph, no sorrow over which I could not soar.

But it was hard, ceaseless struggle to achieve a little of this unity. I yearned for strength and courage; and I was weak, sensitive and timid. I wanted my words to be like burning shafts; and I was shy, diffident, unable to speak well. I wanted hungering, all-absorbing love; and the life around me furnished no scope. I wanted that my Motherland should be powerful; and I found her sons enslaved. I yearned to be a *Rishi* as my forbears were, and I was no more than a little Brahmin boy fastened to a fossilized religious and social groove.

And like a child trying to catch the moon I struggled to project my world of imagination into reality. I yearned; I dreamt; I cried and struggled; at times I tried to kill myself; and I worked. I was not a philosopher, nor a man of great intellect. My heart only had passionate longings and my soul was full of irrepressible tumult. Through vast foolish programmes of self-development, through laborious efforts to become what I called "the incessant wheel of work", through creative works of fiction, through childish efforts at crudely

practised *Yoga*—I tried to bring unity to my imagination, word and reality; and naturally I made a mess of myself.

Through this mess Something led me on. That Something was unattainable and yet roused high enthusiasm. Napoleon's deeds, Dayananda's fiery gospel, Sri Aravinda's prophetic vision threw light on this Something. Oft, it took the shape of a phantom, beauteous maid—a vision of beauty. And the beauty and strength which I missed in real life, I tried to create by imagination; and thus I gave them life in words. My passing experiences became piquant situations. My problems became heroes and heroines. My unspoken sentiments found a voice in their speech. *Tanman* was my vision of beauty; *Manjari* of *Gujaratno Nath* was its grown up shape. *Jagat, Kak, Muchkund, Prithvi Vallabha,* were the imaginary solutions of the problems I was struggling with. I was kicked by reality—the problem of poverty, the difficulty of making way in this hideous city of ours—and was shaped by it. *Sudarshana* had a vision of the Mother as I wanted her to be, free and powerful, the mother of nations; his disillusionment at the end was a cry of despair which came from my heart.

On the one hand my imagination persisted in giving shape to my experience and yearnings. On the other hand that Something impelled me by stern self-discipline in endurance and concentration—*titiksha* and *dhyana.* I tried to co-ordinate the two. The two worlds were remote from each other; and the welding efforts were too weak and childish. Naturally I failed.

I gave myself up to writing romances and romantic plays. I almost gave up the effort at attaining unity of thought, word and deed. But *Yogasutra* was there,—my sacred recital day and night,—practised mostly for worldly ends. Then I studied *Mahabharata,* this mighty Book of Life. It was in 1922, and I was shaken out of the self-complacency of a successful lawyer and author.

That something that was leading me on became a Pillar of Fire, though shrouded in smoke. Suddenly, as if under its magic influence, the vision of Beauty came into life. My dream became a reality and was yet more unattainable than a dream. Through those years of trial and torture, and with the aid of

whatever little training I had in *Yoga,* I summoned all my powers to prevent the unattainable Beauty that had come to life again to vanish into an empty dream. The dream became a reality, unexpectedly, with appalling abruptnes. In those moments of realization, two Truths, so fundamentally woven in the Aryan Culture, which I had never seen so realistically, stood before my dazed eyes.

My individual nature alone prescribed my way of life; to pursue this way of life is the law of my being; any other law for me is false and fraught with fear; to be ready to die every minute to fulfil this law of life was self-realisation.

The other Truth which I saw once for all rent for me the curtain which separated creative Art from creative Life. When my concentration on any object or experience was steadfast, vivid and intense, to the elimination of my consciousness of being myself, it became creative; and creation followed.

Shri Krishna and Patanjali, the great Masters, had taught these Truths to the world. It was given to me, a humble, worldly man, to capture in a little way their secrets in actual life. The vision of Beauty which I had intensely yearned became a living Reality.

The Pillar of Fire was assuming definite shape as it led me on. It enveloped me often; at some rare moments it lifted me out of myself. Invariably, it destroyed the mists of sorrow and defeat and led me from darkness unto light.

The Pillar began to take shape! For a moment, it took the shape of Gandhiji. I saw how the Truths which I had captured had come to life in him. Then one evening, under stress of highly charged imagination, I saw the Pillar of Fire in its blazing glory—just for a few moments. Its radiance blinded me. But in that moment my faith in Aryan Culture was reinforced a million-fold.

In its light, I felt I understood the secrets of Shri Aravinda and Gandhiji, of Aryan Culture as an eternal over-arching phenomenon of life. Truth—compactness of word, thought, and deed,—stood revealed as but a step to the Absolute Integration of Human Personality attained through a stern adherence

to the Law of Moral Causation on which the order of the Universe was structured.

But to understand a thing is one thing; to concentrate on it is different; to realise it by creative concentration is quite different and immensely more difficult—so, so difficult.

I have tried to understand the phenomenon of Aryan Culture, its spread, its trials, its triumphs, its eternal power. My English works *Gujarata and Its Literature, The Aryans of the West Coast, The Imperial Gurjaras, Creative Art of Life,* and *Bhagvadgita and Modern Life,* are but feeble attempts at studying the phenomenon. During this period, my imagination threw up Agastya, Vasishtha, Vishvamitra and Parashuram—the embodiments of dynamic unity; Lopamudra and Lomaharshini, free, triumphant women, man's equal and inseparable; and their gigantic struggles to translate their personality into a world culture which is destined to survive till the end of life. I know the picture is but faint, inartistic embodiment of what I saw. How I wish I had the creative touch of a master artist—a Vyas, a Homer, a Phedias, a Michael Angelo!

The Pillar of Fire has led me on in active life, often without my knowing it. Building up a tradition of law and order, the spread of the gospel of Akhand Hindustan, the constructive effort which has culminated in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and the little contributions towards restoring India to the free and mighty *Aryavarta* of our dreams, are but the materialisation of an urge, which is not mine but only lent to me. I know not why things have happened so. Day after day I feel, as the old time Bhaktas felt, like a kitten; I am lifted by the Mother and carried wherever she wills, and am content to be so carried; and I feel happy and joyous with a strength which is not mine.

But I know—I feel—I am of earth, earthy. Effective integration of personality, without which great creation is not possible, is not for one like me. Attachment, fear and wrath have not been easy for me to control, much less to subdue. You say I have achieved something; but I know I have achieved nothing. I have tried to keep my gaze fixed on the Pillar of

Fire, now distinct, now enveloped in a phosphorescent haze, and now and again lost in a cloud. I have done nothing; my endeavours are but the crude passing expression of the Radiance through the weak vehicle which I know I am.

II

The Heritage of Renaissance

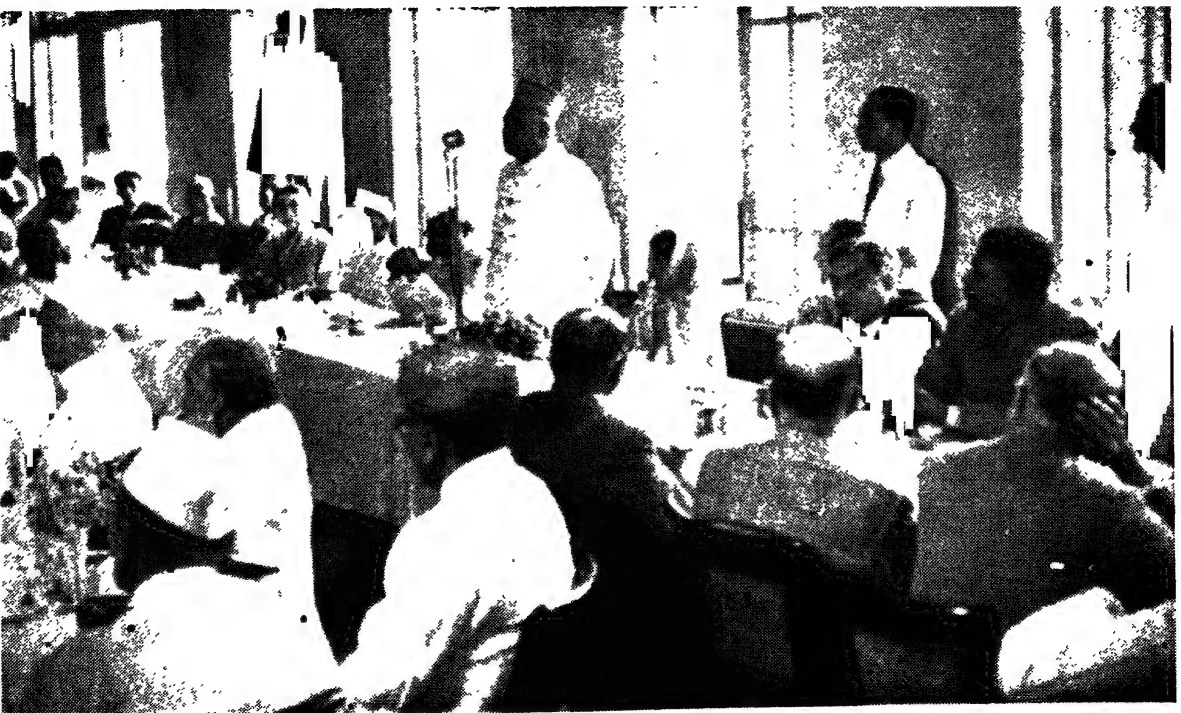
(*Being Munshiji's reply to the felicitations by Shri Pranlal Devkaran Nanjee at a Tea Party at the Taj Mahal Hotel, on* 9th *January,* 1947.)

If I had felt your welcome less, I would have been able to thank you better. But for the moment I am all heart and no lips, and you must forgive me if I am not able to express adequately what I feel at present.

I know well that the kindness which I have been receiving this fortnight last is not for Munshi the lawyer, for there are at least half a dozen of them in this country better than myself; not for the politician, for there are more than a dozen in this country to whom in statesmanship, service and sacrifice I am not fit to hold a candle; not for the ex-Home Minister, for there are, and will be, several Home Ministers in this land: not even for the organiser of educational institutions, for compared to Maharshi Malaviyaji, my work has been as a drop in the ocean. The welcome, the appreciation, the affection which I see around me, are not for me, the individual, but firstly, for the heroes and heroines of my books, who for thirty-five years have found a home in the heart of my readers; and secondly, for the vision of a great and undivided Motherland which I have seen myself, and which, in my own little way, I have invited others to see.

I will tell you of a little maiden, Tanman, which sprang from the imagination of a fresh lawyer. She was the dream-bride of a college student; for years he had created her out of longing, tears and despair.

I created her in my first novel for she was haunting me. But, as the world is made, the immediate reason was the offer



Heerak Mahotsav Reception at the Taj.(9-2-1947)

of 70 annas every week by an enterprising weekly; and I wanted the money for my dhobi, part-time servant and vegetables. I concealed my identity as her author, for, I was afraid of creating an impression on old Solicitors that I was doing something so hideously unprofessional as to write about the loves of little girls. Particularly I stood in dread of old Jamietram, the great solicitor, who was sponsoring my entry into the Bombay Bar; for he always told me that law was a jealous mistress. And I hated all mistresses, jealous or tolerant.

But every Monday—the weekly instalment was published on every Sunday—the old solicitors talked, expressing themselves about the little heroine with a glint in their eyes which belied the years that they carried on their shoulders.

Then I wrote my first historical novel. Without my intending it, I had hurt the feelings of young Jain friends by portraying a Jain Sadhu. With characteristic modernity, they wanted to collect funds and approach the government for sanction to prosecute the unknown author who had, according to them, attempted to create hostilities between classes of His Majesty's subjects. And like veritable Sherlock Holmes, they tried to track down this vile criminal.

I came to know about it and trembled. The vision of a placard "King Emperor vs. Kanaialal Munshi" haunted me day and night. I was penniless, and knew not how I could defend myself. I saw before me my career gone, my future blasted.

In my wretchedness I turned to Jamietramkaka. I went to his office and confessed that I have been writing novels. In high wrath he exploded. "I knew you couldn't stick to your profession." I collapsed.

"What did you write?" he angrily asked.

"Verni Vasulat" I muttered.

The name worked as a magic charm. His face dissolved in beaming chuckles. "The story of Tanman. Oh! Wonderful! Wonderful!" If he had been eighteen and Tanman had been a reality, many things, I found, would have been in danger.

My way was clear. I was no longer a wretched betrayer of that jealous mistress, law. I had created Tanman. He introduced me to an eminent Jain Solicitor, who shook me by the hands vigorously. I was no longer a junior waiting for his briefs. I had given him in his old age a dream-bride which he possibly had missed all his life.

Tanman took Gujarat by storm. Boys tried to find her in life and sighed. Girls cursed me for having killed so lovely a creature when so young. When I went to the Hindu University four years ago, in the eyes of the Gujarati boys who welcomed me, my only merit was to have created her. A young lady in Ahmedabad read the young heroine's tale, and developed a desire to meet the author. It was a dangerous pastime. She met the author seven years afterwards—with what disastrous results you all know. She had to change her name for mine.

Something much more terrific happened to Munj, Prithvi Vallabha, the World's Darling. This king of Malwa of the tenth century was born in Munshi literature in 1918. He was the gay, amoral man radiating power and love—extracting joy from every moment—true to himself under all conditions, in conquest, defeat, in prison, in love, when betrayed and sentenced to death. Critics fell on me like voracious tigers—Munj was so immoral! The truth was that in him the readers saw the man who lived as most people wanted to live but dared not.

Prithvi Vallabha went on the stage and after twenty-four years is still some attraction. He has gone into Hindi, Tamil, Bengali; even Sanskrit recently. He went on the silent screen. In Modi's garbled screen version of it, he travelled all over India. I was present at its premiere release at Lahore and I saw how the crowd reacted to the triumphant attitude of Munj to life! To Gandhiji, not familiar with what is art for art's sake was, this book was suggested as a specimen. He read it, was unhappy with it and wrote me severely. How I—whom he knew so well—could write it! I humbly replied "I created him when I was a struggling junior. He came out of my imagination; how he came I know not; and since he

has come, his vivid personality has found a place in men's hearts. Had he not a right to exist?"

Then I have played on the Mother India theme in fiction, social and historical, in essay and history. Visions of her ancient grandeur and glorious destiny and portraits of those who have made her what she is during centuries, floated before me.

Thus wise, I created the modern woman with the right to love as she wills and live her own life; the man who is prepared to live the life that he is born to, unabashed and triumphant; the joys of man and woman, the joys of the flesh, of the united minds and the linked wills; the joy of life as it is lived—richly, spontaneously and sinlessly; the vivid worship of the Mother in which our old time love of *Bharat*, our collective urge for social synthesis and our dominant political consciousness were fused and transformed into the triumphant Nationalism of the day; and above all the search and portrayal of Beauty, rising above and beyond prudery, convention, tradition and the transient fashions of passing generations.

I did not bring these elements to literature. I was but the unconscious vehicle of the Renaissance which the compact with the West has produced in India.

The Renaissance in India is a mighty phenomenon which released the life forces from the thraldom of one thousand five hundred years. In fact since the classical period of Indian Culture, the Gupta Age, no such flowering of Indian genius had been seen. Two cultures, the European and the Indian, impacted each other and from out of the impact came a revivifying energy which has revolutionised the subconscious of the race.

Writing about this Renaissance Prof. Mukerji, of the Lucknow University, in his work *Indian Culture* dealt with two generations of its exponents. The first generation according to him was represented by Tagore and Iqbal; the second by Munshi Premchand, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and myself. But the father of Indian Renaissance was of an

earlier generation still. He was Bankim Chandra Chatopadhyaya, the founder of the modern novel, humour, and in a sense the Seer who saw modern Nationalism in India in its true shape and colour. His creative art and vision gave us a new medium of expression, a new woman and a new man and above all the vision of the Motherland, revealed to us as the Maternal Power in a form of Beauty which can dominate the mind and seize the heart. He composed the song *Vandemataram* in 1875. Now every home in India rings to it.

For the last thirty-five years I have only humbly carried forward the heritage which he left. To him, the father of our Renaissance, I offer my tribute on this occasion.

Gentlemen, I have done. I thank you again.

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